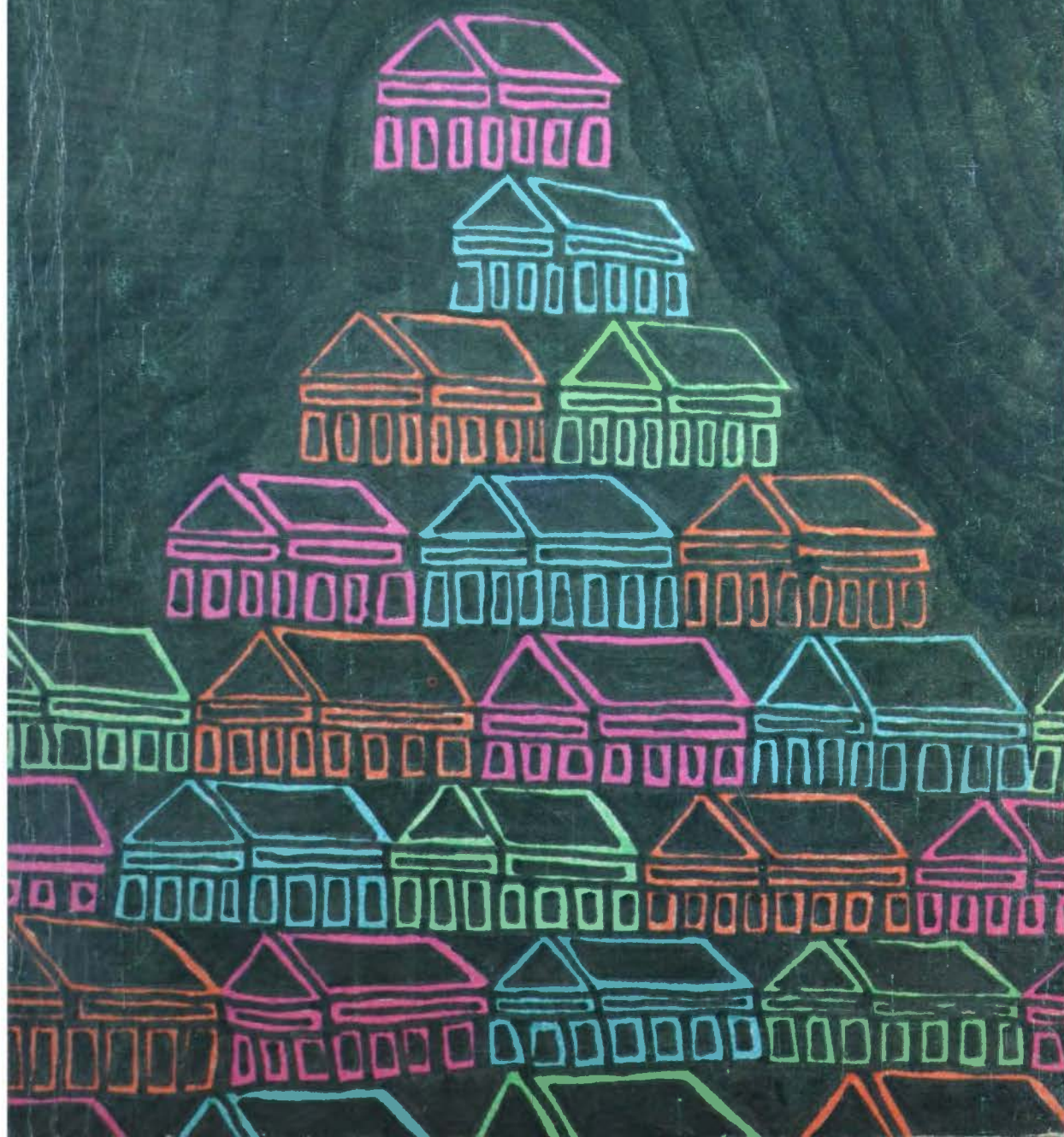


THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

# PAUL







## ABOUT THE BOOK

What Jesus Christ taught, the apostle Paul preached. We should not be surprised then that Paul's letters to young churches abound in gospel truth. *The Gospel According to Paul* reveals in direct and clear language the central beliefs of Christianity as Paul expressed them.

Each of the sixteen concise chapters of this book deals with a specific Christian doctrine, such as man's salvation, prayer, suffering, the Sabbath, and the last days. Modern translations of the Scriptures are used to make Paul's message clear and to remind us that what Paul preached and lived, we also ought to preach and live today.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert H. Parr, of the Signs Publishing Company in Australia, edits three magazines—*Signs of the Times*, *Australasian Record*, and *Good Health*. The books he has authored reveal his twofold career in education and gospel work. He taught for twenty years and has been in editorial work since 1961. This book was written, he says, as a result of his lifelong love affair with the writings of the apostle to the Gentiles.



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THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO

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**PAUL**

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**In the foreground is Mars Hill (the Areopagus), where Paul addressed the Athenians. His address, as recorded in Acts 17:22-31, is inscribed in a bronze plaque at the foot of the hill. In the background is the Acropolis.**

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**THE GOSPEL  
ACCORDING TO**

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**PAUL**

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**ROBERT PARR**

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## PREFACE

Paul is the master theologian of the Christian church. His keen incisive mind and his purity of moral thought along with his thorough knowledge of the Old Testament scriptures and Christ's exposition of them have combined to establish the great body of doctrine that is taught by the Christian church. To teach contrary to the apostle is to court charges of heresy, for his pronouncements are taken by common consent as embracing all the main tenets of the Christian faith.

Some there are who say that the apostle's doctrine sometimes cuts across the faith as taught by the Master. Such people must be guilty of superficial study or at least rash judgment. Amplify the teachings of Jesus Christ, Paul certainly does, but differ from the Lord he served and loved, never! In spite of all that the critic may charge, Jesus Christ and Paul are in complete accord doctrinally.

Therefore if we consider the teachings of Paul and abide by the doctrines he expounds liberally and concisely we shall be living in accordance with God's plan and purpose for us.

In the following pages I have endeavored to outline the main Pauline doctrines simply and clearly, the main text of reference being the Scriptures, of course. However, I have also quoted the opinions of many theologians in some detail in order to show that these opinions are widely held. It is of some importance to notice that apart from quotations used in the chapter on the Holy Spirit no commentator or expositor belongs to the same religious denomination as the author. This was done in order that the charge of narrowness of vision or of parochialism could not be leveled. The point is that these doctrines are scriptural and as such are accepted by those from whom quotations were taken.

It is the earnest hope of the author that those who read these pages may be blessed thereby. To those who follow these doctrinal truths there will come an inner peace that the world cannot give. Jesus said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17).

R. H. P.



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# **What Paul Believed About THE SCRIPTURES**

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## **The apostle Paul recognized**

two authorities and only two—the Scriptures and the Lord. When he referred to the “scriptures” there can be no doubt that he meant the Old Testament, and when he referred to “the Lord” he meant Jesus Christ, God the Father, or both.

Today—nineteen centuries after his martyrdom—the most eminent theologian and the humblest Christian who claims the blood of Jesus Christ as his assurance of salvation, though he may know nothing of theology’s fine points, both set their sights on Paul to direct them in their beliefs. It is no reflection on the great apostle’s beloved Master to say that the Pauline Epistles are the foundation of the belief and teaching of the Christian church. Paul, of course, gathered *his* theology from Christ. Nowhere—and this is of the utmost significance—does the aggressive Tarsan contradict his Lord, nowhere does he question a point of His

teaching; rather, he expands and amplifies what you and I may find written in the Gospels—nothing more.

Paul did not write his famous letters with the thought that one day they would be included in the sacred canon of the Scriptures. Yet there is not a scholar of the Christian church who would question the right of the Epistles to their place in the New Testament. True, individual thinkers question the authorship of this book and that. Some authorities—and this is perhaps the most widely canvassed question—doubt that Paul wrote the book of Hebrews. In this brief treatise all those Epistles attributed to Paul in the King James Version are accepted as his writings.

No, Paul did not write his letters with the idea of their inclusion in the Scriptures any more than you or I expect our letters to be regarded as immortal literature. But because he wrote under the direction of the Spirit of God—and this is his frequent claim—his Epistles have been set beside the Gospels and the other sacred writings of the apostolic church, and they make up a large part of what Christians everywhere revere as the New Testament.

When Paul spoke of the Scriptures, therefore, he meant the Old Testament. And how did he regard them? Remember he was living in a new era. The cross had intervened between Malachi's prophecy—which closed the Old Testament—and Paul's day. Moreover, the prophetic gift had been withdrawn for four centuries. Surely he could have seized the chance to declare the Old Testament (as we call it) or the Scriptures (as he called it) out of date, outmoded, and fit only for the discard. This, however, was far from the fact. To his dying day Paul never spoke or wrote one word that so much as reflected adversely on the authority of the Old Testament. On the contrary, he was at pains to build up the authority of the Scriptures; Paul treasured the Word of God; he held it in awe; he re-

## **THE SCRIPTURES**

ferred to the Scriptures in terms of reverential respect; "the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2), he called them.

He would pose such a question as "What saith the scripture?" (chap. 4:3), which was designed to give his converts a clear testimony that the Old Testament was still their guide and counsel in matters of doctrinal beliefs. And as if to emphasize that very thing and to put the issue beyond doubt, he reminds his readers that in the Old Testament scriptures are the words of life. "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also" (verses 23, 24, first part). Do not let that escape you: "But for us also." And the *us* refers not to his contemporaries only but also to those who live in the post-Calvary period, the Christian Era. The Old Testament, mark you, according to the greatest of the apostles remains significant in the lives of those who love the Lord Jesus.

This was the thought Dean F. W. Farrar wished to convey when he wrote: "Though he can refer to the original when occasion requires, the Septuagint was to him as much 'the Bible' as our English version is to us; and, as is the case with many Christian writers, he knew it so well that his sentences are constantly moulded by its rhythm, and his thoughts incessantly coloured by its expressions.

"And the controversial use which he makes of it is very remarkable. It often seems at first sight to be wholly independent of the context. It often seems to read between the lines. It often seems to consider the mere words of a writer as of conclusive authority entirely apart from their original application. It seems to regard the word and letter of Scripture as full of divine mysterious oracles, which might not only be cited in matters of doctrine, but even to illustrate the simplest matters of contemporary fact." <sup>1</sup>

## **THE SCRIPTURES**



This much, then, is clear: Paul clung to the Old Testament though he lived in the Christian Era. And he taught his followers to adopt the same outlook. Had he written no more he would have made his position clear. But he drives home his point again in his Epistle to the Romans: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (chap. 15:4). Having read this, we can have no doubt about Paul's respect for the Scriptures. He sees in them the only ray of hope for a dark world. Yet some would cast these same Scriptures aside, bowing rather to tradition and accepting those writings that are smoother and more convenient.

Strong as these words are, Paul's strongest affirmation of the strength and power of the Scriptures was not made until the very end of his ministry. Many of less worthy mettle than he, crushed as he was with persecution's mailed fist and battered by the relentless assaults of his enemies, would have questioned their faith in the Written Word, and wondered whether they had followed a cunningly devised fable. Not so the apostle. To Timothy, his beloved protégé, he wrote in the very sunset hours of his ministry: "The holy scriptures, . . . are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:15, 16).

O that Christians everywhere would read that one text and believe it! Gone would be their trifling doubts and their petty grumblings; gone would be their vain arguments over minor issues and inconsequential phrases; gone would be their learned apologies for not accepting this scriptural teaching or that Bible doctrine! "All scripture [we may understand this to mean both the Old and New Testaments] is given by inspira-

## **THE SCRIPTURES**

tion of God." Let every Christian who looks for a loophole read and tremble. Reject that, and you fly in the face of Paul and his Master. Scorn to accept these words, and you place yourself directly in the apostle's line of fire. He does not mince his words nor engage in fine phrases to make his point. He knows by the prompting of the Spirit that God inspired the writing of His Word. And he emphasizes that the Scriptures are the source of doctrine and instruction.

How is it that honest men find themselves in harmony with those who would throw over the Word of God and settle for less than inspiration? Let a man accept this text, and he will find that there open to him new and exciting vistas of promise. Let a man but acknowledge its force and power, and he will find that he may have to reorient his thinking. For if the Bible is written by the inspiration of God, and its writings cut across my beliefs, the only conclusion I can come to is that there must be something wrong with my beliefs. It is not the Scriptures that need to be revised but my thinking that needs to be changed.

And such a decision is neither easy to make nor easy to practice. But therein lies the way of life.

<sup>1</sup> F. W. Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, pp. 35, 36.

## **THE SCRIPTURES**



# **What Paul Believed About JESUS CHRIST**

---

## **Before Paul met the Lord**

Jesus Christ he was His most vigorous enemy. “Breathing out threatenings and slaughter” (Acts 9:1), he sought to stamp out the last survivors of the Christian sect. “A Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee” (chap. 23:6)—his own description of himself—and a member of the Sanhedrin, Paul could not tolerate the upsurge of Christianity that was apparent in Jerusalem and Judea, and he set himself to extinguish the fires of Christian teaching to the very last spark.

When Stephen was stoned it was Paul who held the cloaks of those who actually cast the stones, and thereby he was technically as guilty as they. But he felt no remorse at the time. That another heretic had paid the price for his stubborn folly doubtless pleased him greatly. And as he turned on his heel, giving the lifeless body of the fallen martyr no more than a cursory look, he knew no feeling of guilt, no twinge of

conscience. And then came the experience of Damascus road.

Struck down in broad daylight, he saw the resurrected Christ, and such was the nature of the man that thereafter he bent his every energy and talent to serving Him whom he had so recently persecuted. And the One whose name had conjured up feelings of savage hatred within him so recently, now became the ruling passion of his life. From that day onward to promote the kingdom of Christ was the sole object of the man from Tarsus. And so successful was he in this that, as Robinson says, "At Paul's conversion, Christianity was a Jewish sect. At his death it was a world religion." <sup>1</sup>

Dean Farrar points out that Paul's instant conversion is one of the great evidences of the truth and power of Christianity. "That he should have passed," says Dr. Farrar, "by one flash of conviction, not only from darkness to light, but from one direction of life to the very opposite, is not only characteristic of the man, but evidential of the power and significance of Christianity." <sup>2</sup>

This remarkable and dramatic conversion was as wholehearted as it was sudden. But being what he was, he was not content merely to embrace a new religion. He had to propagate his newfound faith as vigorously as he had once set himself to quench it. Nor was he satisfied with a change of heart; a student who had sat at the feet of Gamaliel, he was hardly likely to be content with less than an exhaustive examination of the Man whom he had met on the dusty road to Damascus. Thereafter, in his study, not one significant phase of Christ's life and ministry escaped him. So searchingly did he examine his faith and so meticulously did he study that life which now ruled his own, that he has left us in no doubt of his belief in the position of Jesus Christ.

And what *did* Paul believe about Jesus Christ? Was

## **JESUS CHRIST**



He the revered founder of a new philosophy of life in which the apostle was strangely interested? Was He merely an earnest man of God? Or was the Nazarene part of the very Godhead? Paul of Tarsus puts the matter beyond conjecture.

Paul recognized Jesus as the Son of God. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). And you will observe that not only does this verse testify to Paul's belief in the Sonship of Christ but it also affirms his faith in the Incarnation. When he wrote "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh" he was setting down his belief in the fact of faith that God's very Son became a man.

He also testifies to the fact of the resurrection. And who could testify more powerfully than he? No man actually *saw* the resurrection. True, the disciples claimed to have seen the risen Christ, but they were hardly in the disinterested spectator class. They had everything to gain by fabricating the story of the resurrection. But Paul had everything to lose by such an affirmation. The moment he claimed to have seen the risen Lord his friends melted away, his reputation was lost, his seat in the Sanhedrin was forfeited, his future was blasted, his authority with the Jews was negated. He was finished. But he was not ashamed to write to the Christians at Rome years later, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you" (verse 11). In the mind of Paul the resurrection was an accomplished and a historical fact.

Jesus, as Paul subsequently wrote to Timothy, "was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Tim. 3:16). And it is

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not unreasonable to say that there is hardly a better one-sentence précis of the life and significance of the Lord Jesus than this verse. It reaffirms Paul's belief in the Incarnation ("manifest in the flesh"); it authenticates Christ's mission as the Messiah ("justified in the Spirit"); it reminds us that Christ's work was the cynosure of the unfallen hosts of heaven ("seen of angels"); it subscribes to the teaching that Christianity was not for the Jews only ("preached unto the Gentiles"); it drives home the universality of Jesus Christ ("believed on in the world"); and it attests to the fact of the ascension ("received up into glory"). Is not this a neat summation of the main facets of belief that Paul—and the Christian church generally—holds about Jesus Christ?

Neither do the sufferings of Christ escape the apostle's attention. "For as the sufferings of Christ," he wrote, "abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ" (2 Cor. 1:5). Notice that it probably was Paul who first stated so certainly that it was the sufferings of the Lord Jesus that enabled Him to bring consolation to mortal sinners in the depths of their miseries. This thought thunders into a whole new doctrine when in his letter to the Jewish Christians he wrote, "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Here is the empathy of Christ—the entering into our feelings, the firsthand knowledge of what it is like when I endure the harrowings of the devil's most galling temptations. Christ knows—and understands; Paul plainly says so.

It is in the verse just quoted that we have Paul's belief in Christ's high-priestly work positively outlined. He is "a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God" (verse 14). And by Him we may "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we

## **JESUS CHRIST**

may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (verse 16). This high-priestly work that Christ performs is not a mere ceremony; the title is not merely one of courtesy. He is the sinner's divine advocate (1 John 2:1), who pleads His blood on behalf of the penitent who approaches the Father's throne. Other than His precious blood there is no stronger argument. The sinner who claims the spilled blood is cleansed and forgiven! Paul believed and taught just that.

This conciliatory work of Jesus Christ is one of the great themes of the Pauline writings. Time and again he returns to it. "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight" (Col. 1:19-22). Here again is a synopsis of Paul's great teaching that in Christ and in Him alone there is reconciliation for sinners, made possible by the death of God's Son, and His advocacy on our behalf before the Father. Can there be a doctrine of greater importance than this? Is it not the very keystone of salvation?

Paul returns to the crucifixion many times, emphasizing it as the central theme of belief. "But we preach Christ crucified," he proclaims, "unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:23, 24). And this is the alpha and omega of his own faith; he made this clear when he wrote, "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (chap. 2:2). He sees

## **JESUS CHRIST**

Christ as our "passover . . . sacrificed for us" (chap. 5:7).

This mention of Christ the Passover reminds us that it is to Paul that we go for much of the wording of the communion service. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (chap. 10:16). This leads naturally to those verses we hear whenever we gather around the Lord's table: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me" (chap. 11:23, 24). For the Corinthians, Paul reconstituted the Lord's Supper, for they had allowed all kinds of shameful side practices to creep into the celebration of this solemn service. Drunkenness, gluttony, and disorder, to say nothing of the ostentatious demeanor of the wealthy, had made the Lord's Supper a mockery. So Paul put it in perspective, reminding his Corinthian friends—and us—that it was to be a simple and meaningful ceremony, designed for the individual's own edification, a beautiful memorial, a constant reminder of Calvary's deepest meaning. But there was something else: it was more than a memorial, precious as that was to the church; it was to point gloriously forward to the second coming of our Lord and Saviour: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (verse 26).

**While still a young man, and  
with the honor and  
rewards of the world within his  
grasp, Paul responded to  
the call of Christ.**

## **JESUS CHRIST**





Great as the crucifixion of Christ was to Paul, the resurrection was even greater. Without the latter Paul recognizes that all else is vain. "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain. . . . And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (chap. 15:14-17). On the resurrection, therefore, hang the tenets of Paul's faith. The resurrection he knows to be true, however. He holds that truth not only by faith but also by sight. For he saw with his own eyes the risen Lord. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ," the apostle adds, "we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept" (verses 18-20). It was this glorious truth that inspired Paul in all his heroic labors for his Lord.

Moreover, he knew where his Lord dwelt. He had not been on the Mount of Olives to see the ascension, but he knew just as certainly where the Lord lodged. Did he not write of this to the Hebrew Christians: "[Christ] who being the brightness of his [God's] glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3)? And to the Colossian believers he wrote: "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Col. 3:1).

One more interesting (and often overlooked) facet of Paul's belief in Christ is that in which he declares his Lord to be the Creator of the universe. John said, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3). And Paul reiterates this thought in these words: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible" (Col. 1:16). But Paul goes one step beyond John in this matter. Not only is Christ the Creator; He is, he declares, the sustainer

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of the worlds in space and the controller of the tiniest speck of life and matter. "By him all things consist" (verse 17).

Where does Paul stand, can we say, regarding Jesus Christ? What did he believe? He believed in the Incarnation; he recognized the divine providence in His life; he saw the significance of His sufferings; he subscribed wholeheartedly to the reality of His death, resurrection, and ascension; he emphasized His heavenly dwelling and His high-priestly work. But first—and best—of all, Paul believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. Can we do less?

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Paul*, p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, p. 149.



# **What Paul Believed About THE HOLY SPIRIT**

---

## **There was no doubt in**

Paul's mind concerning the nature and work of the Holy Spirit. To the apostle the Holy Spirit was a living entity, not merely a godly influence, divine attribute, or superhuman power.

That he regarded the Holy Spirit as a divine being can be seen clearly from what he says about this third Person of the Godhead:

*The Spirit possesses intelligence:* "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:10, 11).

*The Spirit possesses great power:* "Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God" (Rom. 15:19).

*The Spirit has prophetic powers and communicates to man:* "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith" (1 Tim. 4:1).

*The Spirit is grieved by sin but seals the redeemed:* "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).

*The Spirit of God dwells in man:* "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16). "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" (chap. 6:19).

*The Holy Spirit is eternal:* "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God?" (Heb. 9:14).

*The Spirit of God is omniscient:* "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:10).

Thus does Paul build up a pen picture of the Holy Spirit, not in one compact chapter but here a little, there a little, that our concept of Him shall not be vague but positive and definite.

Paul knew that a great work of God's Spirit was the writing of the Holy Scriptures. Of course I do not mean that the Spirit of God seized the quill and actually penned the words, but that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16). And whereas Paul and Peter sometimes contended over points of doctrine, the great apostle would never argue with Peter's statement, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21).

Paul also recognized Christ's close relationship to the Holy Spirit. He speaks of "Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God" (Heb. 9:14). The Holy Spirit guided Christ not only in His sacrifice but also in His resurrection. Again Paul agrees with Peter, who speaks of "Christ . . . being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18). Paul phrases it thus: "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT**

in you, he . . . shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit" (Rom. 8:11).

This last text opens up a tremendous vista of exciting spiritual contemplation. When we think of the resurrection day (see 1 Thess. 4:16, 17) we think of the Saviour coming in the clouds of glory to waken the sleeping saints. We think of Christ thus doing the Father's bidding. We are prone to forget that the Spirit has an important part in this climactic and thrilling event. The assurance that "he . . . shall also quicken your mortal bodies" indicates that, as we should expect if we would but consider it, the third Person of the Trinity would be associated with the Father and the Son.

Often we hear people speak of Christ dwelling in the heart. We know that this expression does not refer to the physical heart, the pulsating organ that assures the body tissues of life through the blood. In Biblical usage the heart is the seat of the emotions and the very depth of the mind. This, then, is how Christ dwells in the heart; it is in a figurative sense. Coupling two of Paul's statements, we may see how this can be: "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts" (Gal. 4:6) and "that he would grant you, . . . to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Eph. 3:16, 17).

The reason for the role played by the Holy Spirit after Pentecost—when the Spirit descended upon the disciples with a mighty manifestation of power—has been well stated in these words:

"The Holy Spirit is Christ's representative, but divested of the personality of humanity, and independent thereof. Cumbered with humanity, Christ could not be in every place personally. Therefore it was for their interest that He should go to the Father, and send the Spirit to be His successor on earth. No one

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT**

could have any advantage because of his location or his personal contact with Christ. By the Spirit the Saviour would be accessible to all. In this sense He would be nearer to them than if He had not ascended on high.”<sup>1</sup>

As a comment on this phase of the Spirit, W. H. Branson says:

“How glorious is the dispensation of the Spirit! Through Him the fullness of the Godhead is brought into vital touch with man; through Him Jesus dwells in the hearts of His children.”<sup>2</sup>

The close alliance of Christ and the Spirit has been pointed out in these words:

“Those who see Christ in His true character, and receive Him into the heart, have everlasting life. It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of the life eternal.”<sup>3</sup>

Paul believed that another great work of the Spirit was to bring men to God. “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). Can anything be plainer? Can any work be greater? And thus led by the Spirit, what a mighty change is wrought in the life! These are Paul’s words: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. . . . If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22-25).

Because the Holy Spirit is so important in the work of bringing men to God, it is not surprising that Satan counterfeits the personality and work of the Spirit. Paul knew of this and warned his protégé Timothy to beware of “seducing spirits” (1 Tim. 4:1). And to the Thessalonian believers he wrote about “the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish” (2 Thess. 2:9, 10).

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT**

One of the great questions men ask is, "What is the unpardonable sin?" Jesus put His finger exactly upon it in these words: "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" (Matt. 12:31, 32).

What did Jesus mean? How may one commit this sin? When the Spirit speaks to a man and that man speaks against, or resists, the Holy Spirit, eventually the Spirit's wooing ceases, and that man, having rejected the call to serve God, hardens his heart and turns his back upon God. He elects of his own free will to deny the Spirit's call. This is how W. H. Branson so ably states it:

"It is this refusal to heed the pleading of the Spirit that is so fraught with danger and peril to the soul. As the voice of the Spirit is quenched, and as men continue on in sin and transgression in violation of conscience, the conscience becomes callous and seared; and the Spirit's call is rendered less and less audible as time goes on until finally the conscience becomes seared as with a hot iron. (See 1 Timothy 4:2.) It is this hardening of the heart, this continuance in sin in disregard of the pleadings of the Spirit, that finally grieves the Spirit and compels Him to turn from the heart in sorrow, leaving the soul to the fate of its own choosing. God's warning is: 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man.' Genesis 6:3. There comes a time when men by their refusal to heed the call pass beyond the point where it can be heard. The Spirit is literally 'grieved' away. Not that He would not gladly continue to call after the wayward one, but He sees that there is no longer any use. 'Ephraim is joined to idols: let

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him alone.' Hosea 4:17. So long has the deaf ear been turned to the Spirit's voice that it can no longer be distinguished from other voices.

"The unpardonable sin is not some particular transgression which God refuses to forgive even though it be repented of, but instead it is the sinful, continual hardening of the heart against the Spirit's voice until the conscience is seared and the heart so hardened that His voice can no longer be recognized. The continued transgression of any command of God, the wilful and repeated indulgence of any sin may lead to the sin against the Holy Ghost."<sup>4</sup>

Weymouth's translation of Paul's words makes it wonderfully clear that these are Paul's sentiments:

"For it is impossible," says the Spirit, "in the case of those who have once for all been enlightened, and have tasted the sweetness of the heavenly gift, and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have realized how good the Word of God is and how mighty are the powers of the coming Age, and then fell away—it is impossible, I say, to keep bringing them back to a new repentance, for, to their own undoing, they are repeatedly crucifying the Son of God afresh and exposing Him to open shame. For land which has drunk in the rain that often falls upon it, and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sakes, indeed, it is tilled, has a share in God's blessing. But if it only yields a mass of thorns and briars, it is considered worthless, and is in danger of being cursed, and in the end will be destroyed by fire" (Heb. 6:4-8, Weymouth, third ed.).

"If we wilfully persist in sin after having received the full knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains in reserve any other sacrifice for sins. There remains nothing but a certain awful expectation of judgement, and the fury of a fire which before long will devour the enemies of the truth. Anyone who bids

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defiance to the Law of Moses is put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment, think you, will he be held to deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, has not regarded as holy that Covenant-blood with which he was set free from sin, and has insulted the Spirit from whom comes grace?" (Heb. 10:26-29, Weymouth, fourth ed.).

This should answer for all the question, "Have I committed the unpardonable sin?" The answer in simple words is, "No, not if you are concerned whether you have. For the very fact that you are troubled about this thing indicates that the Spirit is still striving with you in your heart, and this indicates that He has not withdrawn Himself from you."

While therefore, the Spirit is pleading with your heart and thus performing the great work He has to do, you are not without the bounds of God's mercy; but the continual putting off of the day of decision, the continual procrastination to which the human heart is so greatly addicted, will cause the gradual and eventual withdrawal of God's Holy Spirit. This is the most serious, this is the unpardonable, sin.

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 669.

<sup>2</sup> William H. Branson, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> White, *op. cit.*, p. 388.

<sup>4</sup> Branson, *op. cit.*, pp. 141, 142.

## THE HOLY SPIRIT



# **What Paul Believed About FAITH**

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## **It was Paul who first defined**

faith. Other writers in the Bible seem to have taken it for granted that everyone would know what faith is. But if you omit Paul's famous definition you are struggling to convey the concept of faith. And so Paul, at the outset of his great dissertation on the noble men of faith in sacred history, set down his definition of faith thus: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1).

I believe that definition is almost enough in itself to prove the inspiration of the book of Hebrews. Who but a man inspired would have spoken of such antithetical ideas as "substance of things hoped for," and "the evidence of things not seen"? But then it is not surprising that Paul had so clear a picture of what he meant. He uses the word *faith* in no fewer than 159 texts, and in some of them he uses the word more than once. Why did Paul write so much about this one thing

whereas other Bible writers speak of faithlessness?

The answer is that some men see one aspect of God's great plan; some see another dimension of His purpose; others are consumed with yet another approach to the gospel. All are right; all have more than a gleam of truth. Jesus kept talking about the kingdom of heaven; Moses continually spoke of the law; John discourses on love. Paul's word is *faith*—and he has much to say about it.

Of course the word *faith* is used in a number of senses in the Bible. Cruden's Concordance lists four main scriptural meanings of the word, but he points out that some meanings have minor subdivisions. Obviously we cannot hope to deal with such a multiplicity of meanings in a short compass as this is. We must stick to that which Paul defined and which is reproduced above—"the substance of things hoped for," or to put it even more simply, a strong belief in the words of God and the outworking of His purposes.

Paul believed God. He had great faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He had confidence to know that what God planned for him was right for him to follow—and it was the only course that would bring him contentment.

"Come over into Macedonia, and help us" (Acts 16:9), the man said to the apostle in a God-given dream. Paul could not but obey. He had faith to know that God's biddings are His enablings. He may not have sensed the magnitude of the task, but it is certain that had he seen the whole of his European ministry in prophetic panorama complete to that last moment of execution, he still would not have hesitated.

This is why he could enter into the feelings of those giants of faith who march through the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. He more than appreciated the extent of the faith that was theirs; his own was akin to the faith of those giants of Old Testament times.

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Later when God moved Agabus to foretell Paul's capture by acting out his prophecy, Paul was not dismayed. Agabus took Paul's girdle and bound himself with it, then said, "Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles" (chap. 21:11). Then his friends began to beg him with tears not to go near Jerusalem, for it could well be his undoing. His reply was direct: "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done" (verses 13, 14). Here is faith that says God's way is the best, though to me the outlook is black and the possibilities terrifying. Small wonder, then, that Paul was able to write, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

This is evidence of a lively active faith, a supreme trust, a heart acknowledgment of God's all-wise care for His children.

You can see it shining through Paul's experience whenever you catch up with him. When he answered the Macedonian call he eventually found himself in Philippi. There he and his companion, Silas, fell afoul of the authorities and were clapped into prison, after being given thirty-nine strokes each with the lash. Their backs bruised and lacerated and their feet in stocks, they could have felt very sorry for themselves; but at midnight, Luke reveals, they were praying and singing hymns of praise, "and the prisoners were listening to them" (Acts 16:25, R.V.). What was it about these two foreigners that constrained the other prisoners to listen to their psalm-singing at midnight? One would think curses and cries for silence would have been more in order. But something of the shining

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faith of the apostles flashed through the songs they sang, and their fellow prisoners could but listen. Paul, you see, had faith that Jesus Christ was in control of the entire situation, and therefore there was no need to worry.

Then came the earthquake. It upset everything, and the doors swung open and the shackles fell from the prisoners' limbs. They were free. The jailer, poor man, knowing the Roman attitude toward keepers who allowed their charges to escape, sought to dispatch himself at the point of his sword, but Paul cried, "Do thyself no harm: for we are all here" (verse 28). Two minutes later the same jailer was begging Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (verse 30). And he and his household tasted the grace of God that night, simply because one of His champions had infectious faith.

When Paul stayed in Corinth the Jews were in an ugly mood. Some had listened to his message and some were converted, including Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue at that place. "And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (chap. 18:8). It was then that Paul had a vision in which his Lord told him not to be afraid but to speak up for the truth. Moreover, he was assured of God's protection and blessing. It was not easy to accept such a commission. The Jews were angry, and stirred up trouble. They haled Paul unceremoniously before Gallio, the deputy of Achaia, and accused him of persuading "men to worship God contrary to the law" (verse 13). Things looked black for the moment, but before Paul could utter a word in his own defense, Gallio dismissed the case. The apostle's faith had carried him through again, and he remained in that unlikely place for eighteen months and established a church. So the man's faith in God, his utter addiction to what God told him to be right, believing that whatever happened to him

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God's hand was in it and over him for good, enabled him to do great things for God. This was Paul's faith.

So we could multiply the evidence of Paul's faith in God and his strong belief in his Master's strength and interest in his life. See him before Agrippa; behold him before Festus; observe him before Ananias the high priest, and you see a man of composure and dignity. He is not concerned for his own safety; his faith in God is real and firm. He is not afraid of what men may do to him.

This was his attitude to the very last. As he languished under close arrest in Rome he wrote to Timothy, concluding his letter with a spirit of high and noble faith. Death was very near—a horrible mutilating death—and he knew it. Yet he wrote with calm assurance: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

His Master years before had said: "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22). And Paul simply did what his Master had ordered.

Such faith must have its reward, but such faith does not come by chance; it must be nurtured by a day-to-day communion with God, whose ear is ever tuned to catch the cry of all who would come to Him.

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# **What Paul Believed About MAN'S SALVATION**

## **Paul is at his best**

when he is discussing man's eternal salvation. It should not be forgotten that Paul lived in a period of transition—from the era of the old dispensation to the new, from the period of the sacrifice of animals to this new era when the great antitypical sacrifice of Jesus Christ was made once and for all.

We accept the fact as a matter of course; we would look askance today at anyone who would suggest that an animal should be slain to symbolize the propitiation for sin. But in Paul's day many people still clung to the old ways. Either they did not believe in the sacrifice of the cross or they failed to see its full significance. Paul had to make the issue very clear to his converts, many of whom wished to reach out for Christ with one hand and cling to the old ways with the other. Paul had to show the new Christians—Gentile and Jewish—what was God's will for them in this new era.

Despite Paul's break with the past, his basic teaching was not different from that of the Old Testament. On the contrary, he took as his main theme a text from Habakkuk and revitalized it as only he could. It is important to notice that fundamentally Paul had nothing new to bring; there was merely a new slant to be given to an old, old teaching. The text he used as the basis of his teaching was "the just shall live by his faith" (Hab. 2:4). Three times he quoted the text (Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38), and it pervades the entire structure of his teaching on man's salvation. It is strange how many had forgotten the idea in his day, and it is equally strange how far some have drifted away from it in these modern times. Luther had to remind people of the sixteenth century that they could not achieve eternity by performing penance. When salvation by works had so permeated the structure of the church that it became impossible for a man to see the efficacy of Christ's blood for the huge agglomeration of penances and performances that hedged it about, Luther called upon men everywhere to seek their eternal salvation by their faith in the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse from sin.

Paul clearly saw that it was God who first sought us. (Salvation by works portrays man as seeking God.) Thus he wrote: "God . . . hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ. . . . God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:18, 19). "We were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Rom. 5:10). For a comment on this subject we cannot go past Dr. D. M. Ross, who says:

"God is ever besetting them [His estranged children] with His reconciling love. They do not need to 'work' to win His love. It is waiting for them, it is pressing in upon them. Nowhere does Paul throw out the least hint that God has to be reconciled to His estranged children. It is God who takes the first step

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towards reconciliation, not the estranged children. It is the unmerited reconciling love of God, manifested in the Cross of Christ, which is not only at the very beginning of their reconciliation with God, but it is the power working upon their heart and will which brings it about. All that God looks for from them is a decisive response to His reconciling love. With that response God and His estranged child *are* reconciled.”<sup>1</sup>

The “decisive response” that Dr. Ross mentioned is the choice of Jesus Christ as Lord of one’s life. “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” the Philippian jailer asked, and Paul replied, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:30, 31). In another place Paul, preaching at Antioch, is recorded as saying: “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (chap. 13: 38, 39). Yet again, in writing to the church at Ephesus he wrote: “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Eph. 2:13). So a man’s eternal salvation is gained by the precious blood of Christ. That is God’s wonderful provision. Man’s part is that he must accept and believe.

Thus God’s loving arm is outstretched to bring the sinner to Himself, to restore the returned prodigal to the position of sonship. But “the reconciled child is decisively committed to a new ethical life, for there can be no reconciliation where there is no loyal acceptance of the ethical ideals of his Father.”<sup>2</sup> And these ethical ideals of God are expressed, of course, in His holy law. This, it should be emphasized, does not suggest that a sinner must keep the law to become reconciled to God; rather it underlines the thought that the sinner who is reconciled to God will want to

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live in conformity with the will of God—and the expression of this is His law.

When the sinner escapes the toils of sin, there are three progressive steps that follow. Paul expressed it thus: "But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11, R.S.V.). The sinner is washed clean of his sin, but he must accept (believe in) the power of Christ's blood; he is acquitted when he asks forgiveness of sin through the merits of this spilt blood; and he is sanctified as he appropriates the power of God offered to him through the Holy Spirit. Sanctification is not accomplished in a day, a week, a month, or a year; rather, it takes a lifetime.

Dr. Farrar in a comment on Paul's Epistle to the Romans sums the matter up in these words:

"The end and aim of the Gospel of God is the salvation of man. Man is sinful, and cannot by any power of his own attain to holiness. Yet without holiness no man can see the Lord. Therefore, without holiness no man can be saved. How, then, is holiness to be attained? The Gospel is the answer to that question, and this Epistle is the fullest and most consecutive exposition of this divine dispensation. The essence of the answer is summed up in one phrase, 'JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.' " <sup>3</sup>

Paul himself set it out in these simple words: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Rom. 3:24, 25).

It is a pity that men appear to have lost sight of the great truth that it is the blood of Christ and our acceptance of that provision that enables us to reach out by

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faith and enjoy the prospect of eternal life. There are those who cling to the belief that man must achieve—by his own efforts, by doing things, by burning candles, by paying money, by good works—the favor of God and thus eternal life. There are some who seek the help of departed saints to secure their election into that state of eternal bliss to which every Christian earnestly looks. This is a tragic state of affairs. God at no time through the writers of His Holy Word, ever suggested that such was the way of salvation. Rather, He has left it clearly set out in the words of the apostle Peter: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

<sup>1</sup> *The Spiritual Genius of St. Paul*, pp. 102, 103.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, p. 586.



# **What Paul Believed About EVERYDAY LIVING**

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## **It is amazing how Paul**

reaches down the trackless path of nineteen centuries and influences the behavior of modern man. Equally amazing is the fact that in spite of our modern customs and manners the rugged old apostle is very much up to date. Moreover, venture into what facet of human life and living you choose, Paul seems to have been there before you; he has elaborated on it; he has given out principles and precepts that if followed lead to happiness.

Are you, for instance, bothered about your income tax? Are you—and who isn't?—tempted to chisel off a little of what you should properly pay? Paul has a word for you. Listen: "Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the *powers* that be are ordained of God. . . . Rulers are not a terror to the good work, but to the evil. And wouldest thou have no fear of the power? do that



which is good, and thou shalt have praise from the same: for he is a minister of God to thee for good. . . . He is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil. . . . For for this cause ye pay tribute [taxes] also; for they [the tax collectors] are ministers of God's service, attending continually upon this very thing" (Rom. 13:1-7, R.V.).

Did you ever think of the income tax collector as a man performing the service of God? This is the great problem Paul presents; it is downright dangerous to read him. The first thing you know your whole outlook is changed. When next you sit down to make out your income tax remember that if you cheat you are cheating the servants of God—according to the word of the apostle.

Paul was probably the first to tell his followers to let their conscience be their guide. True, the phrase isn't his, but such a sentence as, "To him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean" (chap. 14:14), must surely paraphrase that. What else could he mean?

Tradition has it that the apostle was a man of wiry frame, full of nervous energy, always on the go, restless as the sea, on the move constantly. To travel the distances that were on his known itineraries—omitting such reasonable assumptions that he carried the gospel to Spain and the traditional idea that he actually trod British soil—he must have had a body strength that was hardly less than remarkable, and so his tips on physical fitness should be well worth listening to. But if you peruse his statements pertaining to the human body you may be in for some surprises.

For example, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. 3:16, 17).

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No man ever before (and very few since) said that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and because it houses so exalted a being it is our duty to give better than casual attention to it. Does not this mean that we should give consideration to diet; does it not postulate abstention absolutely from things that weaken and tear down body strength? Can you, for instance, imagine the apostle giving the nod of approval to cigarette smoking? Can you conscientiously pour the poison alcohol into the temple of the Holy Ghost?

Moreover, this virile and vigorous traveler re-emphasizes this very thing a few chapters later: "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? . . . What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (chap. 6:15 [first part], 19, 20).

This adds depth to this dimension. "Ye are not your own." Have you ever thought of that when you abused your body by overindulgence, by driving it too hard, by neglecting its welfare? "It's my life; I'll do as I please" is a philosophy that is a sign of our times. Yet Paul turns the spotlight of reality on that kind of talk; you have no right to say things like that. On the other hand, Paul has given us a succinct rule, which if mankind would only follow, would result in much less sickness, much less unhappiness, fewer premature deaths. This one statement if followed could revolutionize the lives of many millions, yet its simplicity is staggering. It is this: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (chap. 10:31).

Perhaps Paul's most important advice is contained in his letter to the Colossians: "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; . . . for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:23, 24).

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This was a new concept to the Colossian believers—as it may well be to many people today. If you drive a bus, if you sweep floors, if you cook meals, if you make beds, if you plow fields, milk cows, push a pen or a wheelbarrow, take pictures, or take out tonsils, you must, if you follow the Pauline injunction, do it with a thoroughness that would be yours if you were doing it as a personal service to the Lord Himself.

George Eliot in her poem *Stradivarius* suggests this high standard of excellence in one's chosen field. When friends were inclined to laugh at Antonio Stradivarius for aiming so high in his work that only perfection would do, he replied, as the poetess expressed it:

“ ‘Twere purgatory here to make them ill;  
And for my fame—when any master holds  
’Twixt chin and hand a violin of mine,  
He will be glad that Stradivari lived,  
Made violins, and made them of the best.  
The masters only know whose work is good;  
They will choose mine, and while God gives them skill  
I give them instruments to play upon,  
God choosing me to help Him.’ ”

“God choosing me to help Him”—it is not very far removed from Paul’s words: “For we are labourers together with God” (1 Cor. 3:9). If mankind would embrace this as a philosophy of life, there would be no bounds to the possibilities of excellence to which he could attain.

In a chapter that fairly bristles with maxims for higher-plane living, Paul restates this necessity for diligent business practice. “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.” If you want a paraphrase of this, go to Dr. Wand’s translation of the same verse: “The Lord’s journeyman must be business-like, full of enthusiasm” (Rom. 12:11, K.J.V., and Wand). Is this not a neat thumbnail sketch of a Chris-

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tian businessman? I imagine Paul as he worked as a tentmaker, as he sewed his seams, as he reinforced the corners and set in his ropes, would allow no slipshod work to pass. He would have set a high standard of attainment for himself.

Paul knew that the real criterion in man's behavior was not so much what he did or what he said, but what he thought. Probably no writer of Holy Writ was more of a psychologist than the apostle—though he would not have thought of himself as such. But Paul gave much thought to what went on in men's minds. That is why he urged: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8).

Next to a man's mind Paul regarded a man's neighbor as of great importance. He said much about how people ought to treat their fellows. "I implore you," he said, "to be united in counsel, in sympathy, in purpose; to free yourselves of envy and of vanity; to think of others in all humility as better than yourselves; to refrain from pushing your own interests, but instead to further the interests of others" (Phil. 2:2-4, Wand).

This was the theme of Paul's thinking in the department of human relations. "Think of others," he kept saying, and whenever he picked up his pen—or more correctly, whenever he dictated a letter to his amanuensis, for he did little actual writing himself—sooner or later he was setting down rules and precepts for better living, precepts such as "be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another" (Rom. 12:10); and, "recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. . . . Live peaceably with all men"

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(verses 17, 18). Then, at the end of this chapter comes his stroke of master psychology: "Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (verses 20, 21).

Thus Paul saw a great truth which, possibly, only Jesus had seen previously: if you want to win your adversary to your way of thinking, show him a kindness, do him a favor, and you have won a friend.

In the closing segment of his first letter to the Thessalonians he continued with his homilies on how to live with a neighbor. Some of his more cogent advice is contained in these verses, from Dr. Wand's translation: "Live at peace with one another. . . . Encourage the fainthearted, . . . strengthen the weak, . . . show patience towards all. See that you do not return evil for evil, but try always to bring about the greatest good for each other and for everyone. Cultivate a happy disposition. Pray continually; and in all circumstances give thanks, for that is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not stifle the gift of the Spirit, or disregard His leadings through prophecy. Put them all to the test: hold fast to that which is good, but leave severely alone every sort of evil" (1 Thess. 5:13-22, Wand). All this is practical and stimulating advice. What a pity mankind has forgotten to follow it!

In spite of all the good advice, Paul recognized that the weaker brother would always be there to be dealt with, to be helped and edified. It is typical of true greatness that a man who sets high standards for himself is gentle with those not so strong as he. "Brethren," he wrote, "if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). To this he adds the injunction written to the Corinthian believers: "Where-

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fore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). One cannot read these words without sensing the innate gentleness of the man. In spite of the natural reserve of the apostle, in spite of the impetuosity, the impulsiveness, and even the brusqueness, there was a softness that glowed through. His kindly dealing with the runaway slave Onesimus won that recalcitrant to the Lord.

Basically Paul was an outward-reaching man. His love for the souls of men dominated his whole thinking. And miraculously he seems to be able to communicate this to men living after him in other ages. John Wesley wrote in his Journal, on May 24, 1738: "In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate-Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. . . . I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for my salvation; and an assurance was given me, that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death." <sup>1</sup>

Though there are many fascinating aspects of Paul's dealings with men, one important one must be included here. Although we know nothing of Paul's wife we know he must have been married, for a member of the Sanhedrin had to be married. Commentators think that they must have separated on Paul's conversion, though this may be a slight on a good woman who kept quietly in the background. Certain it is, however, that Paul knew none of the comforts of home as he continually moved about. Neither did he know the ministrations of a wife; he is specific on this point. However, he gives counsel to those who would listen: If you can live as I do, well and good, he says, but if this is too strict a discipline, then marry. This summarizes his sentiments. But he goes a step further, and it is an important step. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave

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himself for it" (Eph. 5:25).

It is to Paul that women today owe their emancipation. He it was who recognized women as people, not as chattels—a very advanced piece of thinking for a man of his Eastern cultural background living in the age in which he did. It was Paul, too, who wrote: "Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (verse 33). And if only every couple could guarantee to follow just that one verse what a splendid world this would be! "Husbands, love your wives," is very sound thinking; but the apostle goes even further. Far beyond it, in fact. The great gospel that he preached was the gospel of love—love to man, love to one another.

Moreover, it was he who in his day did what someone ought to do today. To the Corinthians the word *love* had immoral connotations. The Corinthians—and it was in the church there—were guilty of uncleanness, immorality, incest, and lasciviousness. That was what they thought of when the word *love* was mentioned, just as the same word suggests sex to millions today.

But Paul put the Corinthians straight, and in his memorable discourse on the subject he showed charity (love) to be the beautiful and sacred thing it is. Read 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, again, and you will marvel at the beauty of the language and the depth of meaning to be found in the words:

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. . . . Charity suffereth long, and is kind. . . . Charity never faileth. . . . And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

Finally, there is this injunction for everyday living: "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another,

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if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, . . . and be ye thankful" (Col. 3:13-15).

These are words to live by.

<sup>1</sup> C. T. Winchester, *The Life of John Wesley*, quoted by Francis G. Peabody, in *The Apostle Paul and the Modern World*, p. 70.





# **What Paul Believed About SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

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## **Before we enter upon a**

discussion of Paul's views on spiritual gifts, we must clearly understand what we mean by the term. As used by the theologian and the student of Paul's writings, the term means those particular abilities that God may bestow on a person, which are usually of a specialized nature and which are designed to bring blessing to others.

Paul sets it down thus: "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. . . . Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. . . . For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will" (1 Cor. 12:1-11). Later in the chapter he says: "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues" (verse 28).

Using other translations as a guide, we may be more specific as to what the apostle had in mind:

*The word of wisdom*—practical wisdom.

*The word of knowledge*—understanding of truth.

*Faith*—faith.

*Gifts of healing*—the ability to heal.

*Working of miracles*—ability to perform great deeds.

*Prophecy*—preaching.

*Discerning the spirits*—the capacity to distinguish between the divine and the counterfeit.

*Divers kinds of tongues*—various kinds of linguistic or ecstatic utterances.

*Interpretation of tongues*—the power to interpret what someone says when under the influence of the Spirit he speaks in tongues.

Spiritual gifts are known to theologians as the *charismata*, which means "special gifts."

First we must notice that Paul believes that these abilities are direct gifts of God. And it should be noted that not all of these gifts are highly academic or intensely spiritual in nature. Paul is saying that the gift of practical ability is as much a gift of God as is the gift of prophecy (preaching).

The "word of wisdom" signifies the very highest type of wisdom. William Barclay says, "It is nothing less than the knowledge of God Himself."<sup>1</sup> And he quotes Aristotle's definition of the term as "striving after the best ends and using the best means."<sup>2</sup>

The "word of knowledge," the gift mentioned second, is, according to Barclay, "the knowledge which

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knows what to do in any given situation. It is rather the practical application to human life and affairs”<sup>3</sup> of the word of wisdom mentioned above. Simply stated, these two phrases mean that God gives the power to know and interpret His will. The people having them may be the theologians and expositors, but He gives others the extremely valuable gift of applying in their own lives what others have explained. “Wisdom, to Paul, is not identical with that which the Greeks meant by the word. Paul’s wisdom . . . is not scholarship but insight.”<sup>4</sup> And the possessor of Paul’s kind of knowledge has the gift of applying that insight to his own life.

Let us couple the next two gifts together, for they are of a kind. The gift of healing and the working of miracles have always interested mankind. In other days possessors of these gifts have been held in awe. In these ultrasophisticated days, the man who lays claim to either of these gifts is variously regarded as a crank, an eccentric, a charlatan, an impostor, a fanatic, or a saint. By some he will be regarded as a man of God, but the majority will regard him with suspicion, distrust, and even contempt, depending on his methods, demeanor, background, church affiliation, and a host of other variables.

There was no doubt that the gift of healing was present in the early church. Paul himself had this gift. “And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mother’s womb, who never had walked: the same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked” (Acts 14:8-10). In the last chapter of Acts the case of the father of Publius is recorded. This man was stricken with what is described as “a fever and . . . a bloody flux” (that is, dysentery). It is stated, “Paul entered in,

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and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him" (chap. 28:8). The next verse indicates that the news spread rapidly and soon the islanders were lining up for Paul's healing, and they were not disappointed.

Is this spiritual gift of healing abroad today? Do any people possess it in this modern age? The answer must be an unequivocal Yes. Many reputable people in conservative denominations are claiming the healing gift, and one must be wary of skepticism in view of results. The day of miracles is not past. It is a dangerous thing to scoff at something merely because we may not fully understand it. The Roman Catholic Church has claimed this gift for centuries and has maintained a special committee to investigate claims to miracles.

There has been much interest in the claims of certain members of the Anglican communion who believe that they have rediscovered this gift. Other churches, some more vociferously than others, make claims to the gift of healing, and some even hold meetings and bid whosoever will to come and be healed. This sort of healing is often accompanied by much publicity and noisy and extravagant announcements, and the results often are hardly on the credit side. The main result seems to be that the skeptics grow more skeptical and the unbeliever becomes an acknowledged scoffer. Newspapers are inclined to investigate and publicize the cases that are patent frauds, and one seldom hears the testimony later of people who were permanently cured in mass meetings for the demonstration of the healing gift.

This is not to say that such gifts do not exist in the late twentieth century. We must consider the "by their fruits" aspect, and make our decisions from it. However, God is clear in His instructions on faith healing. "The prayer of faith shall save the sick" (James 5:15) is still the Biblical method, and James gives clear instructions how it should be done. This text pictures,

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not a public demonstration, but a simple ceremony of prayer and anointing carried out by the elders (ministers) of the church.

But in these days surely it is not inappropriate to suggest that the gift of healing has been given in a particular way to those who specialize in this branch of ministry. Doctors, nurses, and physical therapists to whom has been given highly specialized knowledge of antiseptics, asepsis, hygiene, and curative medicines surely may claim that the gift of healing has been given to them. Today people are alive and going about their normal work because of new techniques in surgery, new discoveries in prophylactic medicine, and new developments in the field of antibiotics. Is not this a gift of healing equally as is the more spectacular "laying on of hands"? Did not the same God who empowered the healing of the cripple cited above reveal to Fleming and Florey the magic that is penicillin? Did not God, who enabled Paul to restore Eutychus (see Acts 20:9-12), also grant the gift of an anti-polio vaccine to such earnest investigators as Salk and Sabin?

This is not to say that medicine and the surgeon's knife have superseded the method of the laying on of hands and earnest prayer. It merely raises the point that in various ages God elects to use various methods. The new does not necessarily oust the old; rather, it is another aspect of the gift of healing.

"The working of miracles" is not quite as general as the King James Version suggests. Other translations give an alternative rendering. Barclay translates the phrase as "wonderful deeds of power," and he believes it refers to the exorcising of demons. In other words, this "working of miracles" could mean that some have the power to cast out devils. Although this may not be the common function of the church in the general situation, Barclay reminds us that, "exorcism

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is still very much of a reality in the mission field. At all times it is the function of the Church to minister to a mind diseased and disturbed.”<sup>5</sup>

The gift of “prophecy” as translated in the King James Version is not quite what we would expect on the face of it. The word is more correctly rendered as “preaching,” and no one will doubt that some men have a definite gift for preaching and others have not.

Who has not heard an earnest preacher with splendid material and a good message meticulously prepared drone on *ad infinitum*, his bored congregation becoming increasingly somnolent, until eventually the sluggish river of his words runs dry and he sits down—to the unanimous sighs of relief of the audience.

On the other hand, we have all listened with rapt attention to a gifted speaker whose material may be less striking and whose preparation is less complete than that of the other person. Yet by the force of his oratory, or by the vigor of his presentation, or by the strength and forcefulness of his personality, or by the sheer infectious enthusiasm of the man, or a combination of any or all of these, we have sat through his discourse entranced, and felt that he finished too soon when he sat down at the end of his address. Such a one has the gift of “prophecy” (preaching), and it is God who gave it.

Not everyone has the discernment to differentiate between the real and the counterfeit. Satan, with his astonishing manifestations of power and strength, can and will so counterfeit the wonders of the Almighty that it may be difficult for the ordinary man to discern between the two. God has given some the ability to distinguish between what might be termed good and bad spirits. The revelator speaks of “the spirits of devils, working miracles” (Rev. 16:14), and we should not assume that simply because an undeni-

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able miracle is wrought that God is behind it. Satan also has such power, and we should know that he will use it for his own diabolical purposes.

From this scripture we are considering, some people will be able to discern whether such miracles are wrought by God or His adversary. John admonished his friends to be wary in this matter: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1). Unfortunately, many people are greatly impressed by the flamboyant manifestations of power they may witness, and they believe that such can emanate only from the power of the Almighty. Paul, however, thought otherwise—and so did John—and they urged their followers to test every spiritual manifestation.

Last of all is the gift of tongues and the interpreting of them—glossolalia, as it is sometimes called. This gift is, to say the least, spectacular, and we have all heard stories of individual performances or group manifestations, if we have not actually seen them ourselves. Some set much store by the gift of tongues and feel that if they find the ability to discourse in an unknown tongue God has conferred a rare and signal blessing upon them. It may be rare but is it also very important? Notice that the gift of tongues is the last on the list—which seems to indicate that it is hardly the most important of the spiritual gifts.

The Corinthian church members evidently prized this gift highly, but Paul was not so sure. In fact, he was at pains to show them that there was one better gift than all of these. This is what he says: "Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way" (1 Cor. 12:29-31).

Then follows the wonderful chapter beginning,

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“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” Thus Paul reveals that the gift of love, the God-given ability to love in spite of all that may be done against us, is the greatest gift of all, far surpassing the gift of tongues. Indeed if love is not in the heart, the gift of tongues, he says, is virtually useless.

But what exactly did the gift of tongues involve? Let William Barclay make his comment:

“This matter of *tongues* was, as we shall see, causing a great deal of perplexity in the Church at Corinth. Although it still exists even in this country [Scotland], it is for the most part alien from our experience. What happened was this—at a service of the Church someone would fall into an ecstasy and would pour out a torrent of unintelligible sounds in no known language. It was a highly-coveted gift because it was supposed to be due to the direct influence of the Spirit of God. To the congregation it was of course completely unintelligible. Sometimes the person so moved could interpret his own outpourings, but usually it required someone else who had the gift of interpretation to do so. Paul never questioned the reality of that gift of tongues, but he was well aware that it had its dangers, for hysteria and ecstasy and a kind of self-hypnotism are very difficult to distinguish.”<sup>6</sup>

Paul, who claimed he had the gift of tongues (chap. 14:18), was not particularly impressed with the gift. He points out that the gift is not of much use unless the listener (or the speaker) can interpret. “I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by reve-

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lation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?" (verses 5-7). You will notice in the first verse of that quotation that Paul would prefer that Corinthians should give attention to prophesying (that is, preaching), for "greater is he that prophesieth [preacheth] than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret."

Farrar adds this comment: "He [Paul] argues that 'tongues' are not meant for the Church at all, but are a sign to unbelievers; and that, if exercised in the promiscuous way which was coming into vogue at Corinth, they would only awaken, even in unbelievers, the contemptuous remark that believers were a set of insane fanatics, whereas the effect of preaching might be intense conviction, prostrate worship, and an acknowledgment of the presence of God among them."<sup>7</sup>

Paul puts this gift in perspective when he says, "He that speaketh in an unknown tongue edifieth himself; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church" (verse 4). These gifts are the gifts of the Spirit to the church. "Covet earnestly the best gifts" (chap. 12:31), is what the apostle urges.

<sup>1</sup> *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Peabody, *The Apostle Paul and the Modern World*, p. 225.

<sup>5</sup> *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 123.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>7</sup> *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, pp. 506, 507.

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# **What Paul Believed About** **PRAYER**

## **Paul was a man of prayer.**

F. G. Peabody says: "Nothing is more striking in the story of Paul than the abundant evidence of his habit of prayer. His life of action and his argumentative powers have preoccupied the attention of many students; and he has often been estimated either as a travelling missionary or as a controversial theologian, or as both. The fact is, however, that as peace of mind lay beneath his tumultuous career, so within his amazing activity of mind and body there was maintained a habitual practice of prayer, restraining his temper and sustaining his hope. At almost every epoch of his experience, Paul may be discovered at prayer, and it certainly affords matter for surprise that this revelation of his character should have been so slightly appreciated or even observed. His prayers are singularly devoid of formalism; they are spontaneous, unstudied, warm with restrained emotion." <sup>1</sup>

Paul prayed when and where he felt the need, and his prayers sprang from the heart. See him in that Philippian jail and listen to him and Silas singing at midnight and praying too. This was an exercise in which the apostle indulged regularly. He spoke to his Lord frequently. He knew what he was talking about when he urged his Thessalonian friends to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). Such prayers as Paul was wont to pray are completely devoid of formalism—because Paul, for all his overpowering personality, was an informal person.

Paul often began his Epistles (even that to “the foolish Galatians”) with a benediction or the mention of prayer. And the prayers that form the introduction to most of his letters tell us much about the man. They reveal a gentleness, a sensitiveness, and a sympathy we do not always expect in the apostle. These prayers, too, were usually couched in the language of praise. Time after time he has such phrases as, “I thank my God” (Phil. 1:3), “First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ” (Rom. 1:8), and “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:3). This is typical of the man who knew suffering and setback but who never allowed these things to sour his nature or jaundice his outlook.

Besides praise, Paul’s prayers contained requests. He set it out plainly that it was well for Christians to tell God their problems and to ask for help. These are his words, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:6).

Paul’s greatest contribution to the exercise and practice of prayer is probably that he has taught us to pray—even as his Master taught His disciples to pray. Summarized, his precepts for prayer may be said to be:

1. *Prayer should be approached with reverence.* Paul knelt when he prayed (Acts 20:36; 21:5). This indi-

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cated that the apostle did not approach God nonchalantly or lightly but as a subject doing homage to his king. He also believed that men should uncover their heads while praying, but (according to the custom of the time in that area) he thought it perfectly proper for women to cover their heads, especially in places of public prayer (1 Cor. 11:4-6).

2. *Prayer should be a habit.* Twice he advocated—once to the Romans (Rom. 12:12) and once to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 5:17)—that his parishioners should cultivate the prayer habit. This was a departure for some in his day, for many were content to let their petitions rise to God only when they were in deep trouble—as do many whose intermittent prayers ascend today.

3. *Prayer should be unselfish.* Paul prayed for others. Analyze your own prayers and see how much is really a request for things for yourself. So many prayers enter the “O Lord, bless me and my wife, my son and his wife, we four, no more. Amen” class. When he heard from his friend Epaphras how the Colossians fared he did “not cease to pray for” (Col. 1:9) them. And so he remembered his younger colaborer, Timothy, “in my prayers night and day” (2 Tim. 1:3). And so also Philemon (verse 4), and the Thessalonian brethren (1 Thess. 1:2), the Ephesians (Eph. 1:16), and the Christians in Rome (Rom. 1:9).

And as he prayed for others, so he bespoke a place for himself in the prayers of others (1 Thess. 5:25). There is much blessing to be gained in reciprocal prayer. Have you tried it? Indeed, Paul may be said to have initiated what we now call prayer partners. “Now I beseech you, brethren,” he wrote, “for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me” (Rom. 15:30). He realized, as do some students of prayer today, that in unity of supplication there is

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power and prevailing.

4. *Prayer should be made confidently.* Some pray with a servility and a self-effacing apology that must be truly embarrassing for a loving Father to hear. This was not Paul's idea of approaching the Father. On the contrary, he wrote: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). This does not mean that we should come with brashness and presumption. What he has in mind is a holy boldness, which is to say, confidence. We can confidently approach the Lord in prayer because we know that there is One who understands our every problem and difficulty. And because He knows and understands, we may be confident of His hearing our requests.

Those are the rules for prayer Paul would have us follow. But he made one other important thing clear: Do not cease to pray because you feel that your petitions may not be expressed as well as you think they should be. This is Paul's word: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26). The Spirit of God takes these halting, stammering tongues of ours and the words they utter and with His own matchless gift He presents them to the Father in the power of His strength. And thus when a prayer comes from the heart the Spirit covers our deficiencies and bridges the gap between our gross imperfection and God's immaculate perfection.

Paul's greatest prayer has not been recorded for us. It is merely hinted at, yet that very suggestion is surely indicative of the heights to which man can rise in prayer. The apostle is relating how his friends played him false. He says: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it

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may not be laid to their charge” (2 Tim. 4:16). When we thus pray for those who despitefully use us, it may be said of us that we have absorbed and are practicing what the Lord Jesus exemplified on the cross when He prayed for His persecutors: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

<sup>1</sup> *The Apostle Paul and the Modern World*, p. 200.

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# **What Paul Believed About SUFFERING**

## **We have already noticed how**

Paul confounded his tormentors by lustily singing hymns in the jail at Philippi. This seems to set the scene for Paul's attitude toward personal suffering. It may even be said that Paul's attitude toward suffering was to ignore it. He ignored his bleeding back at Philippi, and God intervened. He ignored the miseries he suffered at Iconium when having been stoned and left for dead he crawled to his feet and moved on to the next town. He ignored the tears and pleas of his friends as they begged him not to go to Jerusalem in case he should be seized and slain. "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all" (Phil. 2:17).

It is not to be supposed that Paul did not know the meaning of suffering. Rather, there was something in his physical life that tortured him excruciatingly. It is thought to have been his eyes. There is ample evi-

dence throughout the Epistles to support this contention. Earnestly he begged God to relieve him of this affliction. Three times he besought the Lord to remove this "thorn in the flesh" as he called it, but three times God denied his plea. Having laid his case with prayer and supplication before the Lord, and having received the same answer three times, he was content. He did not sulk or complain. Rather, he regarded it as something given him to prevent his egotism from reaching ungainly proportions. "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (2 Cor. 12:7).

It was after God's refusal to cure Paul's infirmity that his true greatness shone out. It is easy to follow the Lord when times are good or when He has wrought a great work for us, but it is something else to trust Him blindly when we are in the grip of sickness or in the toils of trouble. But if, like Job, we can trust Him in the shadows, we have learned well the lesson that He would teach. And Paul had that supreme confidence in Him who doeth all things well. Could any word be more steeped in resignation than this: "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (verses 9, 10).

D. M. Ross says this: "Sufferings are multiplied for Paul, but he handles them, not as a problem to be worried by, but as an opportunity to be seized." <sup>1</sup> Only of a man who could write "most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities" could such a statement be truthfully written.

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Can anyone comprehend how much grace is available to a man who accepts God's will as final and depends on His grace? William Barclay indicates how a relatively modern itinerant preacher fashioned in the mold of St. Paul found the grace of God "sufficient." Speaking of this abundant grace, he says, "It made Paul able to go on. John Wesley preached 42,000 sermons. He averaged 4,500 miles a year. He rode 60 to 70 miles a day and preached three sermons a day on an average. When he was 83 he wrote in his diary, 'I am a wonder to myself. I am never tired, either with preaching, writing, or traveling.' That was the work of the all-sufficient grace."<sup>2</sup>

And consider the richness of the grace that must have been made available to the young girl in this story—also told by Barclay: "Once a man went to visit a girl who was in bed dying of an incurable and a most painful disease. He took with him a little book of cheer for those in trouble, a sunny book, a happy book, a laughing book. 'Thank you very much,' she said, 'but I know this book.' 'Have you read it already?' asked the visitor. And the girl answered, 'I *wrote* it.' That was the work of an all-sufficient grace."<sup>3</sup>

Certainly Paul knew the sufficiency of God's grace. He lists some of the tribulations he faced, and it should not be forgotten that this list was compiled early in his career: "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily,

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the care of all the churches" (chap. 11:24-28).

But all these did not overwhelm the apostle. He believed that God's way for him was best; he could not find it in his heart to do other than accept the gift of God's grace and say: "For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11).

What made a man of Paul's mettle change in his outlook? He was not a man of meek and quiet spirit by nature. He was a man of fire and impatience; he was not prone to suffer the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" without a murmur; he was not inherently a patient and long-suffering soul. What accounts for the change in this man from Tarsus?

Perhaps Dr. Ross has put his finger on the cause of his change as nearly as anyone could. He says:

"It was at the cross of Christ Paul came by his understanding of the ministry of suffering. In the Cross he saw the depths to which the love of God could stoop and the heights to which the love of man could rise. The love which was at the heart of the Cross laid its power upon him. It worked into his life to transform it into the likeness of Christ's. And what that love was doing for himself he was sure it would do for others; that it held the secret of the transformation of the life of humanity. So his message was centered not in the teaching of Jesus but in Christ and Christ crucified." <sup>4</sup>

There you have it—the love of Christ and Him crucified was the factor that changed a man of irascible nature into one who used even his sufferings to the glory of God.

Finally, we can do no better than quote Ross's estimable summation of St. Paul's attitude to suffering. He says:

"It is little wonder, then, that Paul did not worry himself about suffering as a problem to be solved by reasoning, but was ever intent upon seizing the opportunities it brought within his reach for attaining the

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high ends on which his heart was set. Is it not just along this line we shall most surely find light upon the mystery of the existence of suffering in a world ruled by a God of love; if not full light, yet light enough for cheering guidance in the rough and dark places of life's pathway? If pleasure and worldly prosperity are the things we regard as most worth striving for, the problem of suffering may become ever darker and more distressing. If, on the other hand, it is our chief ambition to be conformed to the likeness of Christ and to have fellowship with Christ in loving service to our fellows, we may be able to make our own, Paul's triumphant words: 'We rejoice in our tribulations.' Romans 5:3." <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Spiritual Genius of St. Paul*, p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 289.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 172, 173.

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# **What Paul Believed About CHRISTIAN LIBERTY**

## **The amazing thing about**

Paul is his ability to see clearly through a confused problem. And he is never dismayed by its complexity any more than he permits himself to be inveigled into interesting and inviting side issues. Although he does digress in his writing sometimes, he never loses clear sight of his problem or his way through it.

The matter of Christian liberty is a case in point. Just what we mean by "Christian liberty" ought first to be defined. Rather than do so myself I shall go to the wise and learned men who have set down the matter squarely. Francis G. Peabody says: "Must one who would be a Christian first become a Jew? Was the rite of circumcision a prerequisite for fellowship in Christ?" <sup>1</sup>

Here is the matter succinctly stated in other words: In Paul's day many of the Jewish Christians resented the way the Gentile converts were embracing the faith.



To them it seemed that Christianity was basically a Jewish religion, a development from Judaism, and the Gentiles were there more or less on sufferance. Therefore, they argued, if we are to allow the Gentiles into what is fundamentally Jewish, it behooves them to do the decent thing and become Jews before they become Christians. They ought to pay some kind of regard to Jewish rites and ceremonies. They ought, for instance, to be circumcised as a symbol that they had undergone a metamorphosis that changed them from outsiders and Gentiles into members of that select band, God's chosen people.

This was a pitiful and pathetic view, as we today profess to see. Most of us cannot believe that anyone could be so blind as to propound such a theory. Even Peter and the other disciples took some time before they could digest the new concept that the door was open to all who would come to God irrespective of kindred, race, or religion. But Paul saw it. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). That should put the issue beyond all doubt, if indeed, there is an issue today.

Speaking to this point, Peabody has this to say in commenting on Paul's Epistle to the Galatians: "Paul vigorously and indignantly announces his purpose [i.e., in writing the Book of Galatians]. 'The business of the letter,' as John Locke with singular directness and sanity stated it, 'is to dehort and hinder the Galatians from bringing themselves under the bondage of the Mosaical law.' " <sup>2</sup>

There were in those days so-called Judaizers who felt that Paul's teaching was too lax and free—and said so. But Paul had his answer ready: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be cir-

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cumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing" (chap. 5:1, 2).

Wand renders those verses in these words: "Christ has made us completely, utterly free. Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves slip back under any yoke of servitude. I, Paul, assure you most solemnly that if you let yourselves be circumcised you will forfeit all the advantage you have from your Christianity."

In those days, this was a new and strange doctrine. For as long as the Jews had existed they had considered themselves the chosen people. Those outside the pale of Jewry had little hope of salvation, they believed. Salvation was of the Jews, they were sure, and nothing could alter that. But here was Paul preaching a new doctrine, a liberal and unorthodox dogma that emancipated all who would come to God through Jesus Christ. It was too much for some. What they could not comprehend was this: "The new faith was thus a way of deliverance from religious provincialism into religious cosmopolitanism. It was given, not to create a new Jewish sect, but to begin a new world-order. The laws of Christ's church were not to be imposed from without or from above, but to be inspired from within. Christian liberty is not a gift granted to servants, but a right inherited by sons."<sup>3</sup>

Thus far twentieth-century Christians would offer no argument. These facts of faith are fundamental. Paul's legacy to the church has been well absorbed. But there are two more steps to Christian liberty. It is here that we need to watch ourselves lest we get out of step with Paul.

The first is that *liberty is not license*. Paul made that clear. "For, brethren," he said, "ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (verse 13).

Commenting on this text, William Barclay says:

"Paul's theology always ran one danger. If he de-

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clared that the end of the reign of law had come, and that the time of the reign of grace had arrived, it was always possible for some deliberate misinterpreter to say, 'That, then, means that I can do what I like; that all the restraints are lifted, and I can follow my inclinations, my passions, my desires, my emotions wherever they lead me. Law is gone and grace ensures forgiveness anyway.' But to the end of the day there remained for Paul two obligations.

"(i) One he does not mention here, but it is implicit in all his thinking. It is the *obligation to God*. If God loved us like that then the love of Christ constrains us. I cannot soil and stain a life which God paid for with His own life.

"(ii) There is the *obligation to our fellow man*. We are free, but that freedom is a freedom which loves its neighbour as itself." <sup>4</sup>

No, liberty is not license. We are not free to dip and delve into every sinful pleasure and flagrant wickedness that beckons us. Being free from "the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2) simply means that in Christ we are free from the natural result of sin, which culminates in death—eternal death.

W. E. Moore's comment on Romans 8:2 seems to sum up the matter completely: It "means that those who belong to Christ have a law operating in their lives which frees them from the law which works in the lives of those who do not belong to Him. As the force of gravity pulls us to the earth, so the 'law of sin' pulls us from God, while the 'law of the Spirit' draws us to God." <sup>5</sup>

*Paul's liberty did not discount his influence on others.* He would not allow himself unrestricted liberty when such behavior would cause a weaker brother to stumble. Having regard to the question and the opinions at large in the church at Corinth, he says: "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of your's become a

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stumblingblock to them that are weak. . . . Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Cor. 8:9-13).

In his incisive comments on 1 Corinthians 8, Barclay points out that there are three great principles which "are eternally and for ever valid."<sup>6</sup> These are:

- "(i) What is safe for one man may be quite unsafe for another. . . .
- "(ii) Nothing ought to be judged solely from the point of view of knowledge; everything ought to be judged from the point of view of love. . . .
- "(iii) All this leads to the greatest truth of all. No man has any right to claim a right, to indulge in a pleasure, to demand a liberty which may be the ruination of someone else."<sup>7</sup>

How then can we sum up Paul's (and therefore our) attitude concerning Christian liberty?

First, we are no longer under bondage to the ceremonial law—the law of sin and death—and therefore do not have to become Jews in order to accept Christ.

Second, we are free from the law of Moses, but this does not give us unbridled license to do as we please. We are still subject to the government of God and are not at liberty to commit ourselves to immorality, dishonesty, blasphemy, and the like.

Third, what our consciences may freely allow may not be acceptable to other (weaker) brethren. If seeing us indulge in something causes them to stumble and fall we should forgo our own liberty to perform such an act.

Here are two good texts that seem to sum up the whole matter of Christian liberty: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17). And, "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty" (James 2:12). This is the law of the Ten Commandments, of course, which a reading of the

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previous verse clearly indicates.

Let me underline that important point again: Christian liberty does not absolve the Christian from keeping the commandments of God. Moreover, this has been the teaching of theologians for many a long year. In a treatise written in 1890 by a celebrated Protestant ecclesiastic, these significant words appear: "Christian liberty is deliverance from the dogma that salvation is wrought out by obedience,—that is, from external ecclesiasticism, salvation is not in the Church, but in Christ. *The obligation to keep the moral law remains; the obligation of the ceremonial law falls away of itself.*"<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Apostle Paul and the Modern World*, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 89, 90.

<sup>4</sup> *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, p. 49.

<sup>5</sup> *Stronger Than Rome*, p. 105.

<sup>6</sup> *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 84.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 84, 85.

<sup>8</sup> Toy, *Judaism and Christianity*, p. 278, quoted by Peabody in *The Apostle Paul and the Modern World*, p. 238.

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# **What Paul Believed About GRACE AND THE LAW**

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## **Some Christians stumble out**

of step with Paul over the question of grace and the law. We need to be very clear on what Paul believed on the law of God and the grace of Christ. Does the latter supersede the former? Does my faith in the efficacy of the spilled blood nullify the law of God? Let Paul answer: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Rom. 3:31). Wand translates this text in these words: "Do we then nullify the Law by this faith? Certainly not. We actually establish the very reason for its existence."

We could also hark back to that text quoted at the end of the last chapter—2 Corinthians 3:17: "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Observe William Barclay's pertinent comment on this verse and the verses preceding it:

"Where the Spirit is, says Paul, there is liberty. He means that so long as man's obedience to God is domi-

nated and conditioned by obedience to a book and a code of laws he is in the position of an unwilling servant and slave. But when it comes from the operation of the Spirit in his heart then the very centre of his being has no other desire than to serve and obey God, for then it is not law but love which binds him. There are many things we would resent doing, if we were compelled, servant-like, to do them for some stranger, but it is a privilege to do them for someone we love. Love clothes the humblest and most menial tasks with glory. 'In His service we find our perfect freedom.' " <sup>1</sup>

This is well said, for there is a great gulf fixed between the attitude of the Christian and that of the Pharisee of old. They were so "cabin'd, cribb'd, and confin'd" by laws and restrictions that the keeping of the law was for many a chore and a burden. J. Paterson Smyth makes this interesting comment:

"But Jewish religion had sadly deteriorated. The few rules of guidance grew and grew as priests and rabbis and scribes went on 'fencing the Law' for centuries, till these external rules numbered hundreds, many of them petty and tedious and vexatious, and as they grew the soul died out of them and the external rules became substitutes for the living God. If you do these things you have won your salvation. If you fail you are lost. And so God became a great taskmaster, whose rules were hard to count and hard to know and harder to do. The common crowd who did not know them were damned. 'This people who knoweth not the Law are cursed,' said the Pharisees. They cannot be saved. The earnest, conscientious Jew who tried to keep them fully had a very bad time." <sup>2</sup>

But the Christian who has surrendered himself to God is one who keeps the law of God because he loves God. His obedience is cooperation as of a son whose trust rests implicitly in the wisdom of his father.

But there are some who say that the law is nailed to

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the cross, and that the keeping of the commandments is not now binding on Christians. Such claims are made on the basis of the text: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Col. 2:14). Read back a verse or two, and you will see that the apostle has been talking about the rite of circumcision and similar ordinances, and the new things that had replaced them—baptism, for example. It was these old ordinances and rites that were abolished at the cross. John Wesley has a comment on this: "This 'hand-writing of ordinances our Lord did blot out, take away, and nail to his cross. (Verse 28 [of Matt. 5]) [Colossians 2:14.] 2. But the moral law, contained in the Ten Commandments, and enforced by the Prophets, he did not take away. . . . The moral [law] stands on an entirely different foundation from the ceremonial or ritual law. . . . Every part of this law must remain in force upon all mankind, and in all ages." <sup>3</sup>

At no time did Paul suggest that the law of God was to be thrown into the discard, but only the rites and ordinances of the Mosaic system. What, then, is the relation of grace to the law? In plain language, why do we need to couple the grace of God with the law of God? Does not Paul say: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9). And is there not ample evidence that sincere and earnest people have tried to obtain salvation by keeping the law?

Let us unravel these questions and see what Paul thought. First, it is possible to *attempt* to gain salvation by keeping God's law, *but it is not possible to achieve it*. "By grace are ye saved," which we have just quoted, stands as one of the great texts of Christendom, and nothing can change that. And we praise God for it. If, indeed, it were laid down that we had to achieve sal-

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vation by keeping the law of God, it would be a sorry outlook for us all, for "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). And "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). So we, as a matter of logic, having all broken God's law, should face our just deserts, which are summed up in that one terrible word: *death*.

But Christ's offer obliterates the horror of death, and by His abounding grace we may be saved. This is one of the wonders of the Christian faith, and no one must pluck this great promise, this magnificent offer, out of our hands.

This brings us to why we should want to couple the law and grace. Let us go to Peabody, who will supply the answer. He says:

"Each task now fulfilled is an answer to God's call; each life is a vocation. God's purpose will be fulfilled, through man, if he will, but in spite of man, if he resist. There is to Paul no contradiction between the affirmation, 'By grace you have been saved, as you had faith; it is not your doing but God's gift,' and the opposite declaration, 'Work all the more strenuously at your salvation.' [Philippians 2:12.] The one teaching is written, Paul says, 'that no person may boast in the sight of God.' The other reinforces resolution with the assurance, 'It is God who in his good will enables you to will this and to achieve it.' Each life, that is to say, has its place in the Divine order. Each nation has its part in God's plan. Each righteous act is suggested by the divine initiative. Conduct becomes the language of faith; ethics is merged in religion; until, in Paul's bold phrase, we may 'become the righteousness of God.'"<sup>4</sup>

Simplified, this means that, having accepted the grace of God as the way of salvation, we find ourselves striving to do what is right, and God does the enabling.

Some think Paul was more than hinting that the law was abolished when he wrote in Galatians 3:24,

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25: "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." Here Paul has in mind the whole Jewish legal system. He means the whole broad concept that the word *law* conjured up in the minds of the Jewish people—all of the ceremonial, moral, and civil statutes.

The ceremonial system led men to Christ in that every facet of it pointed to Christ. He was to be seen in the daily and yearly program of sacrifices, in the construction of the wilderness tabernacle, in the feasts and high days that were part of the daily life of people of that time. Most of all, they saw Him in the Passover service. That is why Paul referred to Him as "Christ our Passover," who is "sacrificed for us."

The moral law likewise pointed to Christ. As sinful man looked into that law he saw himself as he really was; he saw that God had a standard of righteousness for him to reach. When he read, for example, "Thou shalt not steal," and he knew that he had been secretly dishonest, the law brought him to a knowledge of sin, and he would, if he wished to be right with God, make this wrong right and confess his sin. Thus the moral law reminded him constantly that he had great need of a Saviour.

The difference between the ceremonial system and the moral law was this: The ceremonial system was a system of "types and shadows" that ended when Christ, the great Antitype, died for the sins of men. There was no need, after Calvary, for animal sacrifices, for they had lost their meaning. They pointed *forward* to Christ. But once the great antitypical sacrifice had been made the ceremonial system was obsolete. A man was no longer justified by following the old system of sacrifices; he was now justified *by faith* in the sacrifice of Christ.

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The moral law was different; it was still necessary. He who was justified by faith still needed a standard of righteousness. And there is this: justification is not everything; it is only the first step. Justified a man must be; then there is the long road to sanctification. And the law of the Ten Commandments holds up the standard to follow to achieve sanctification. For while justification is but the work of a moment, sanctification is a process that begins at justification and continues to develop while life shall last.

Every born-again Christian knows all too well that justification does not automatically confer on a person those saintly attributes, which are so earnestly to be coveted. These are acquired over long, and often painful, years. The sin that so easily besets has to be conquered and put down; those tendencies to evil which were so evident and so frequently indulged must now be sublimated and subdued. No more can God's moral code, as expressed in the Ten Commandments, be trampled on; gone are the days when it could be flouted. It is now the born-again Christian's pole star; it establishes his moral code; it is his basic life pattern.

But sometimes that born-again Christian stumbles and falls. In other words, he breaks one of God's commandments, for "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). Is he damned for his trespass? Does his fall from grace put him forever outside of God's kingdom? Certainly not! For "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (chap. 1:9).

And how does our fallen, born-again Christian recognize that he is, in fact, guilty before God? Because he sees that he has broken God's law. And that law brings him back to the Saviour. That is the function of the moral law; and until we attain to the perfection of character that will be ours when, by His grace, we stand upon the eternal shore, we shall ever need the

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moral law to direct us to Christ.

This is all part of the process of sanctification. You fall, but you rise again, determined by God's grace not to fall—that is, not to break God's law—again. This is what Peter refers to as “growing in grace.” It is all part of the march to Christian maturity.

And lest there should be any doubt about the matter, let us remind ourselves of the text with which we began this chapter: “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law” (Rom. 3:31).

Commenting on this verse, Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown's (single volume) *Commentary* has this to say: “The glory of God's law, in its eternal and immutable obligations, is then only fully apprehended by the sinner, and then only is it enthroned in the depths of his soul, when, believing that ‘He was made sin for him who knew no sin,’ he sees himself ‘made the righteousness of God in Him.’ Thus do we not make void the law through faith: yea, we establish the law.”

The law of God is the Father's intention for us. He would have us keep it because it is the expression of His own will and because only in observing it can man find true happiness. Conversely, in breaking the commandments, man finds his unhappiness assured. The way to misery is to disregard the divine precepts. If we love God we will keep His commandments. We shall not keep them because we hope to curry favor with Him, but we shall keep them because we love Him who first loved us, and recognize God's law as His will for us. Fulton Oursler expressed this truth in these words: “I do not pretend to be even an amateur scholar of the Scriptures. I read the Decalogue merely as an average man searching for guidance, and in the immortal ‘Ten Words’ I find a blueprint for the good life.”<sup>5</sup> He adds this comment later: “Most certainly the commandments are needed today, perhaps more than ever

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before. Their divine message confronts us with a profound moral challenge in an epidemic of evil; a unifying message acceptable alike to Jew, Moslem, and Christian. Who, reading the Ten in the light of history and of current events, can doubt their identity with the eternal law of nature?"<sup>6</sup> Those who accept the grace of Christ receive that grace to enable them to keep the law of God.

Is this, then, the main function of the law of God? No, there remains a very important work that the law did in Paul's day and continues into the twentieth century. It tells us what is sin and what is not. Under the heading "The Function of the Law to Reveal the Heinousness of Sin," Dr. Wand translates a significant passage of Romans thus:

"Where is all this leading us? To the conclusion that the Law itself is sin? Certainly not. All the same I should not have known sin except for the Law. I should not have known for instance that there was such a thing as inordinate desire unless the Law had said 'Thou shalt not covet.' By the very prohibition the Law reinforced my sinful nature and stirred up in me all kinds of feverish lust. Apart from the Law sin is dormant, (for if no commandment has been issued you have committed no offence). And I lived at one time without reference to the Law, but there came a commandment and sin leapt to life. But that involved death for me. The Law that was intended for life was found in my case to lead to death. For sin, receiving its impetus from the commandment, entrapped me, and then through the penalty attached to the breach of the commandment slew me. By such means is the purity of the Law maintained, and the regulations shewn to be holy, righteous and good" (Rom. 7:7-12). Thus Paul acknowledged that the only yardstick by which you could measure sin was the law of God. Do away with that, he said, and you do away with sin. And though

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we would dearly love to abolish sin, no one is so blind as to suggest that sin will go away if it is no longer pointed out.

The purpose of the law, then, is to point out sin in our lives. It is not the be-all and end-all of the Christian's life. It is not, in itself, the way of salvation. But the Christian, saved by grace, will want to keep it because he wants to do God's will. The keeping of God's law is an outward sign of an inward grace. That is what Paul meant when he wrote to the Corinthians, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing: obedience to God's commandments is everything" (1 Cor. 7:19, Weymouth).

<sup>1</sup> *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> *The Story of St. Paul's Life and Letters*, p. 147.

<sup>3</sup> *Sermons on Several Occasions* (2-volume edition), vol. 1, pp. 221, 222.

<sup>4</sup> *The Apostle Paul and the Modern World*, p. 154.

<sup>5</sup> "The Ten Commandments—Why They Work Today!" *Cosmopolitan*, September, 1951, p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.



# **What Paul Believed About THE SABBATH**

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## **The question is: Which day**

did Paul keep? Did he keep the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, or did he observe Sunday, the first day of the week, in honor of the resurrection? On the answer to this question much depends. If Paul kept one day or the other, it would seem that this would be the day for Christians to keep, for Paul lived and wrote in the post-Calvary era.

Fortunately we do not have to grope blindly for an answer. We know which day Paul kept.

Some are astonished to learn that the word *Sunday* does not occur in the New Testament. The phrase “the first day of the week” does occur eight times in the New Testament. In connection with Paul it occurs only twice. The first time the phrase is used as applying to Paul is in Acts 20:7. This verse says: “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the



morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”

This obviously means that the disciples came together to have a meal, and the time was what we would call Saturday night, for we recall that in those times the days were calculated from sunset to sunset. Thus the first day of the week would be from sunset on Saturday to sunset on Sunday. And this verse simply means that Paul preached until midnight on Saturday night. There is no suggestion that he kept Sunday.

The second text—1 Corinthians 16:2—says this: “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.” This, some have said, is clear evidence that the believers must have been having a meeting and were taking up an offering! But such was not the case. Paul, a methodical man if ever there was one, was merely saying that everyone ought to set a specific day of the week aside so that as a matter of habit he would on that day put aside a contribution toward the deserving poor in other places, so that there would be no hurried collections when Paul arrived. There is no suggestion here of an offering as part of a religious meeting; this text is surely less than flimsy if we would base a belief upon it.

But the evidence that Paul kept the seventh-day Sabbath is far more abundant and conclusive.

In the beginning of Paul’s ministry he preached a powerful sermon at Antioch. He preached in the synagogue on the Sabbath (the seventh) day. Then when he had finished his sermon, “the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath” (Acts 13:42). Here was Paul’s golden opportunity to tell them that the seventh day was not for them but rather that they should worship on the first day of the week—if indeed he had any inclination to do so. But Paul said nothing. So, “the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God”

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(verse 44). The significance of this situation will not be lost on anyone. Quite clearly Paul *expected* the seventh day to be the day of worship. If it were not so he would have told them.

Later at Philippi, Paul and Silas adopted the same procedure. They met with the small band of Sabbath-keepers by the riverside. Here is Luke's record: "And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither" (chap. 16:13). Again we may ask with logic, Why didn't Paul tell these women they were worshiping on the wrong day? The reason is that it did not occur to him because he knew of no injunction that changed the sanctity of the day from the seventh day to the first day of the week.

It was at Corinth, however, that Paul is recorded as keeping the Sabbath consistently over a long period. Notice these texts: "And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. . . . And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them" (chap. 18:4-11). Does not this text clearly indicate that Paul worshiped for seventy-eight consecutive Sabbaths but made no attempt to introduce any such teaching as a change in the sanctity of the day?

Weigh the evidence dispassionately and fairly. Is it not far more convincing to say that from scriptural evidence Paul was a Sabbathkeeper, not a Sunday worshiper? And having regard to all he said about other doctrinal modifications—for instance the rite of circumcision, which had been changed—is it not reasonable to suggest that he also would have said something about the Sabbath had it been changed? It stands to reason.

Unfortunately for those who try to make a case for the sanctity of Sunday, the leading theologians of almost

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every denomination have freely admitted that there is no scriptural basis for Sundaykeeping. The following quotations are but a fraction of those that could be cited, but they will suffice.

“Take which you will, either the *Fathers*, or the *Moderns*, and we shall finde no *Lords Day* instituted by any *Apostolicall Mandate*; no *Sabbath* set on foote by them upon the *first day of the weeke*, as some would have it.”—PETER HEYLYN, *The History of the Sabbath* (2d ed., rev.) (London: Henry Seile, 1636), part 2, chapter 1, p. 28 (italics his). Author: English church historian.

“‘But,’ say some, ‘it [the Sabbath] was *changed* from the seventh to the first day.’ Where? when? and by whom? No man can tell. No, it never was changed, nor could it be, unless creation was to be gone through again: for the reason assigned must be changed before the observance, or respect to the reason, can be changed!!”—ALEXANDER CAMPBELL, “Address to the Readers of *The Christian Baptist*, No. III,” *The Christian Baptist*, vol. 1, pp. 44, 45 (Feb. 2, 1824), in reprint of 1848, 7 vols. in one. Author: founder of the Disciples of Christ.

“It must be confessed that there is no law in the New Testament concerning the first day.”—CHARLES BUCK, *A Theological Dictionary*, art. “Sabbath” (Philadelphia: Crissy and Markley, 1851), p. 403. Author: British Independent minister.

“Sunday (*Dies solis*, of the Roman calendar, ‘day of the sun,’ because dedicated to the sun), the first day of the week, was adopted by the early Christians as a day of worship. The ‘sun’ of Latin adoration they interpreted as the ‘Sun of righteousness.’ . . . No regulations for . . . [Sunday] observance are laid down in the New Testament, nor, indeed, is its observance even enjoined.”—“Sunday,” *A Religious Encyclopaedia*, vol. 3 (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1883), p. 2259.

“The Catholic Church for over one thousand years

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before the existence of a Protestant, by virtue of her Divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday.”—*The Christian Sabbath*, 2d ed. (Baltimore: *The Catholic Mirror*, [1893]), p. 29.

“You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we [Roman Catholics] never sanctify.”—JAMES CARDINAL GIBBONS, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, 43d ed. (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1893), p. 111; 110th ed., pp. 72, 73 (in chapter “The Church and the Bible”). Author: archbishop of Baltimore.

“I honestly believe that this commandment [the Sabbath commandment] is just as binding to-day as it ever was. I have talked with men who have said it has been abrogated, but they have never been able to point to any place in the Bible where God repealed it. When Christ was on earth, He did nothing to set it aside; He freed it from the traces under which the scribes and Pharisees had put it, and gave it its true place. ‘The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath.’ It is just as practicable and as necessary for men to-day as it ever was—in fact, more than ever, because we live in such an intense age.”—D. L. MOODY, *Weighed and Wanting* (Chicago: Revell, 1898), pp. 46, 47. Author: American lay evangelist.

“It may be that Jesus gave them an explicit command so to do [i.e., to meet on the first day of the week]; but of this we have no revelation.”—O. C. S. WALLACE, *What Baptists Believe* (Nashville: Sunday School Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1913), p. 165. Author: Baptist editorial writer.

“They [those who ascribe certain powers to the Catholic bishops] allege the change of the Sabbath into the Lord’s day, contrary, as it seemeth, to the Decalogue; and they have no example more in their mouths than

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the change of the Sabbath. They will needs have the Church's power to be very great, because it hath dispensed with a precept of the Decalogue."—The Augsburg Confession (1530), part 2, art. 7, "Of Ecclesiastical Power," trans. in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper, 1919), vol. 3, p. 64.

"We have abundant evidence both in the New Testament and in the early history of the Church to prove that gradually Sunday came to be observed instead of the Jewish Sabbath, apart from any specific commandment."—GRANT STROH, "Practical and Perplexing Questions," *Moody Bible Institute Monthly*, vol. 37, no. 3 (November, 1936), p. 138.

"The reason we observe the first day instead of the seventh is based on no positive command. One will search the Scriptures in vain for authority for changing from the seventh day to the first. The early Christians began to worship on the first day of the week because Jesus rose from the dead on that day. By and by, this day of worship was made also a day of rest, a legal holiday. This took place in the year 321.

"Our Christian sabbath, therefore, is not a matter of positive command. It is a gift of the church."—CLOVIS G. CHAPPELL, *Ten Rules for Living* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1938), p. 61. Author: Methodist clergyman and author.

"There was never any formal or authoritative change from the Jewish Seventh Day Sabbath to the Christian First Day observance."—WILLIAM OWEN CARVER, *Sabbath Observance; The Lord's Day in Our Day* (Nashville: Broadman, 1940), p. 49. Author: Southern Baptist educator.

"The early Church changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday on the authority given to it by Christ. The New Testament makes no explicit mention that the apostles changed the day of worship, but we know it from Tradition."—*This We Believe* (rev. ed. of the *Baltimore Catechism No. 3*) (Washington: Confra-

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ternity of Christian Doctrine, 1957), p. 190.

These are representative quotations from men of standing in the world of theology and Bible study. They are men held in respect in their own churches and in the theological world at large. We cannot, therefore, disregard the testimony of such a cloud of witnesses. There can be only one conclusion: while the moral law of the Ten Commandments remains, the Sabbath commandment is as binding as it always has been. Just as Paul knew of only one holy day and worshiped thereon, so should we also.

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# **What Paul Believed About DEATH AND THE RESURRECTION**

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## **When His friend Lazarus died,**

Jesus said, “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth” (John 11:11). Paul saw no reason to alter the concept that Jesus had sought to convey to His disciples. The apostle saw death as a long and dreamless sleep from which the sleeper could be awakened in only one way: the trump of God. Writing to the Thessalonian believers he said—and we use Dr. Wand’s translation again for clarity, though you should refer to it in the King James Version:

“I do not wish you to be left in ignorance, brethren, about the condition of the Christians who die before the Lord’s final coming. You must not grieve for your dead like those who have no hope of a final reunion. If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, we must also believe that (since Jesus and His members are inseparable) God will cause those who have fallen asleep in Him to return with Him. This I affirm on the Lord’s own authority: that we who are still alive at His coming



will have no advantage in point of time over those already dead. This is how it will happen. At the appointed summons, given by the voice of the Archangel and the trumpet call of God, the Lord will descend from Heaven in person. The Christian dead will rise first. Then, and not till then, shall we who are still alive be caught up together with them in the clouds and meet the Lord in the air. So shall we be always with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:13-17).

These verses are rich in doctrinal strength. Stated and implied, there is enough in these few verses to make us think deeply. What do they reveal? They show these facts:

1. Death is not the ultimate end of man.
2. Death is a sleep.
3. Those who have "fallen asleep in Him" will be awakened on the last day by the Archangel (Christ) and the trumpet call of God.
4. The "Christian dead" will be resurrected and be "caught up . . . in the clouds and meet the Lord in the air."
5. Then "we who are still alive" will be gathered up also to meet the Lord in the air.

The implications of this verse are also noteworthy. Obviously, those who are thus awakened and raised from their dusty beds are not now in heaven—either bodily or "in the spirit." If the righteous dead were already in heaven, the whole idea of the resurrection would be pointless.

Paul puts forth the idea of death as a sleep with the resurrection as the awakening out of sleep. In this he is in step with his Master, who also in the incident of the raising of Lazarus spoke of death as a sleep and the resurrection as the awakening of His friend.

The five points given above are amplified in a passage Paul wrote to the church at Corinth. Again we use Dr. Wand's translation for clarity: "I will explain the

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mystery: we shall not all die, but we shall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet call. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised immortal, while we who are still alive will be transformed. When this mortality has thus clothed itself with immortality and this perishable nature of ours with imperishability, then the passage will be fulfilled where it is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory' " (1 Cor. 15:51-54).

From these words we gain these additional concepts:

6. The resurrection occurs with lightning speed; it is not a gradual transition; it is accomplished "in the twinkling of an eye" (verse 52).

7. Those who are resurrected and those who, still alive, are transformed will never again know death.

8. At that time death will be conquered finally and forever.

Paul stated the significance of the resurrection far more clearly than did his contemporaries. He saw that the resurrection of the righteous dead was but a facsimile of that of the risen Christ. And of the fact of the resurrection of Christ, Paul was in no doubt. He (Christ) was "seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of about five hundred brethren at once. . . . After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also" (verses 5-8).

And let us not forget that Paul was a completely disinterested party. He had nothing to gain from all of this. He, when he saw the risen Lord, was an unbeliever, an opponent, a persecutor, a fierce defender of the old Jewish faith. He had no wish to be converted to Christianity; it was the last thing he wanted. Yet so compelling was his sight of Christ upon the right hand of God's throne that his doubts evaporated at that moment.

And Paul insisted that the import of Christ's resur-

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rection must not be lost upon His followers. As Christ was raised, so would those who died in the blessed hope of the resurrection be raised. Thus he said: "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen" (verses 12, 13). How clear this is! Just as positive and certain as Christ's resurrection, the evidence of which he had seen with his own eyes, was to be the final resurrection of the righteous. This was something that the new believers had, to an extent, overlooked. Paul would allow none of the significance of the event to escape them. "If the dead rise not," he reiterated, "then is not Christ raised" (verse 16).

Perhaps the one thing he wished to drive home more than anything else was this: If in the acceptance of Christianity his followers gained hope in this life only, then they had quite missed the point, Paul said. The great fact of faith was that even as Christ was raised from the dead, so also would the righteous dead be raised. Paul used these words: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (verses 20, 21).

When this shall happen, that is, when the morning of the resurrection comes, this will be the mightiest climax of history. For then will the fear of death be upon men no more. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (verse 26).

The resurrection of Christ is and always must be at the very foundation of Christianity. Yet learned theologians are nowadays holding the doctrine up to the light that shines from higher criticism, and have come to the weighty decision that the resurrection of Christ was a scientific impossibility! How they can in all

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conscience continue to wear the garb of the Christian ministry with such a heretical doctrine as the basis of their faith—so-called—is beyond the ken of anyone who, with Paul, regards the resurrection as a highly significant plank in the Christian's platform of faith.

"Be not deceived": wrote the apostle, "evil communications corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame" (verses 33, 34).

Dr. William Barclay's comment on verses 33 and 34 of 1 Corinthians 15 is pertinent: "So Paul insists that the Corinthians must not associate with those who say that there is no resurrection. To associate with such is inevitably to risk an infection which can pollute life. To say that there is no resurrection is not a sign of superior knowledge; it is a sign of utter ignorance of God. Paul is unleashing the lash that very shame may bring these wanderers back into the right way."<sup>1</sup>

And even in these more sophisticated days this seems splendid counsel indeed.

Samuel Johnson, that great Englishman of letters who gave us the first English dictionary, was a good man, yet he was very much afraid of death. Indeed, he said "he never had a moment in which death was not terrible to him." Johnson is not alone in this. All who think upon death in the midst of their active living are caught up in a web of fear—unless they have a hope stronger than the fear that would otherwise overwhelm them.

This was Paul's antidote for the fear of death: the certainty of the resurrection. He did not cringe from the sleep of death, because he knew that it was but a prelude to the brilliant pageant of the skies when his Lord would bestow upon him incorruptible immortality.

"No rational man," wrote Dr. Johnson, "can die

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without uneasy apprehension." No one, we agree, except those who have the certain hope of the call of a returning Lord. Paul viewed death from this vantage point. That is why he could write: "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (verses 54, 55).

<sup>1</sup> *The Letters to the Corinthians*, p. 174.

## **DEATH AND THE RESURRECTION**

# **What Paul Believed About BAPTISM**

## **When Paul was converted**

on the Damascus road, he was conducted into the city and later led by the hand of those whom he had formerly persecuted. At the hands of Ananias he received back his sight, then he immediately attended to an important spiritual matter. He was baptized. Luke records the train of events in these words: "And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized" (Acts 9:18). This he obviously regarded as an urgent issue; it could not be put off; it followed conversion as a natural consequence.

And how was Paul baptized? Later in his ministry he was to discuss this rite and to draw a distinction between the baptism of John and Christian baptism. John's baptism, he pointed out, was a symbol of repentance, but Christ came after John, and so Christian baptism was administered "in the name of the Lord

Jesus” (chap. 19:5). Thus baptism, although it still signified repentance to Paul, also indicated that the one who was baptized was now throwing in his lot with Christ’s church. This is what baptism meant to Paul.

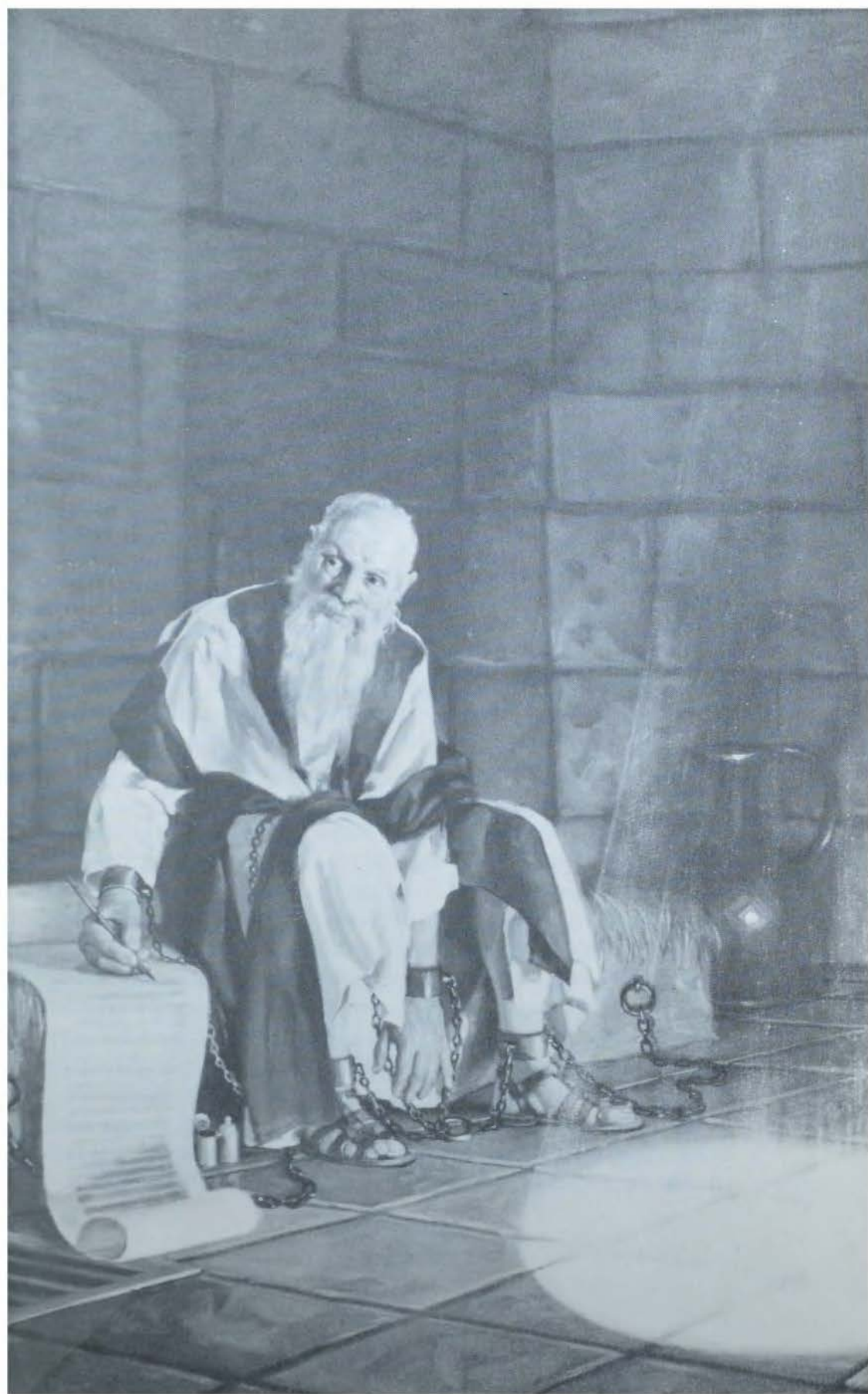
In this manner, doubtless, were Paul’s converts baptized—the Philippian jailer and his family (see chap. 16:33) and Crispus and his household (see chap. 18:8). Years later, recalling his own conversion and baptism, Paul emphasized this aspect. He remembered that Ananias had said to him, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (chap. 22:16).

Notice the word “wash.” The significance of baptism is wrapped up in that word. From all Paul said and wrote about baptism, he would have scorned to accept the so-called baptism as practiced by many modern churches. The sprinkling of a few drops of water upon the head was not his way. The very root from which *baptism* comes means “to immerse, or plunge.” There is no connotation of sprinkling.

A few drops of water do not wash away sin—either in fact or in symbol. We all know that there is no virtue in the water itself, but the symbolic plunging beneath the flood is what Paul had in mind when he spoke of washing away sin. And so there must be a sense of washing incorporated in the act. Paul emphasized this still further when he wrote, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4).

**Paul wrote four epistles  
while a prisoner in Rome—  
those to the Ephesians,  
the Philippians, the  
Colossians, and to  
Philemon.**

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If there was ever any doubt about the significance of the act of baptism, this text dispels it. "Buried with him" means, if it means anything at all, that the candidate must be completely immersed, so that as he comes out of the water he is symbolically rising to a new life. The old man within has died and in symbol is buried beneath the water. Then the reborn (resurrected) soul rises to walk as one who had been dead in sin but who now rises to live a new life in Christ Jesus.

To the Galatians, Paul wrote, expressing the same thought but using these words: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). "Have put on Christ" suggests that the old man has gone, the new man is garbed not in his own righteousness but in the righteousness of Christ. This was a new thought to those who lived in the apostle's day.

Baptism as Paul saw it was the rite given to man to commemorate the resurrection. To the Colossian believers he wrote: "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:12). Clearly, baptism is the God-given memorial of the resurrection.

Strangely—with that stubbornness that is man's inherent propensity—men have cast about to establish their own memorials for the resurrection. Some observe Sunday as holy, and name it a sacred day "because Christ rose on the first day of the week." The New Testament nowhere commands this or even sanctions it. Others regard Easter as the memorial of the resurrection, and regard it as a holy period. But Easter, as everyone knows, is a movable feast, sliding about in the calendar to adjust to the phases of the moon, for actually it is an ancient pagan festival to the moon and other pagan deities. Its pagan origins are wrapped up in the resurgence of growth that comes with the north-

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ern spring. So it was a convenient transfer from celebrating the resurrection that is spring to the Christian festival of the resurrection of Christ. Easter is not God's memorial of the resurrection. God's memorial is baptism. Paul saw that, believed that, and taught that.

Paul, too, would have spurned the idea of infant baptism. He taught that baptism is for the sinner who comes to Christ. He taught that it is a conscious and considered act, not something to which a helpless babe submitted whether he liked it or not. Preceding baptism there must be repentance, a coming to Christ, a putting on of Christ. Can anyone conscientiously believe that a babe of a few weeks can know sin, let alone repentance? Can a child of a few days comprehend that by his baptism he is to rise to newness of life, that he is putting on Christ? No, baptism is for the mature, the one who understands what he is doing as he embraces the faith of Christ, accepting what Christ has done for him and believing that Christ's blood avails for him. Infant baptism, even though practiced in all sincerity, actually makes a mockery of all that sacred rite stands for.

And so we may sum up the rite of baptism as being for people who fully understand what it means. It is not a sprinkling but an immersing. It re-enacts the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; and as such is a testimony to the candidate's belief in the resurrection. It is suggestive of the fact that the born-again sinner is also raised to walk in newness of life. Finally, it is the act signifying that the one who is baptized wishes to join the family of Christ—His church. It is the one act of public acknowledgment of belief in the effectiveness of Christ's death and resurrection by the one who enters the Christian way. He believes that his sins are washed away and that before him stretches future time and eternity of fellowship with his Lord.

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# **What Paul Believed About THE LAST DAYS**

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## **Paul has given a graphic**

picture of the last days of the world. He looked down into history's climactic period and described our own times perfectly. To Timothy he wrote: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

There are those who would say that these attributes have always been in evidence—to some degree or other—and that this list in itself does not prove that we are in the "last days."

There is no way of proving or disproving some of

these things; for instance, can anyone actually prove that men are bigger boasters today than they were at any previous age? Nevertheless, there are some things that can be assessed and compared. Take that phrase: "Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." Consider the vast numbers flocking to sports events at any given weekend, surging into the theaters and the night-clubs, racing over the countryside on Sundays in their sports cars, or crowding into the palaces of vice. Then station yourselves outside the churches and see whether the crowds are comparable. Thousands of churches are suffering from shameful neglect by their parishioners. Some people straggle along at Christmas and at Easter, and that does it for a year. Some don't enter a church from one year's end to another unless someone invites them to a wedding! If ever there was a generation of which it could be written "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," it is this one. The people of other ages have been pleasure mad, but only in the upper classes of society—those who could afford the luxury. But we are members of the affluent society. Never have the rank and file of the population had entertainment at their finger tips as they have today; never have there been so many ways of being entertained and amused devised by man for mankind. This is the age of pleasure that leaves the Restoration period in England far behind and beside which France in its post-Revolution era is made to look overrated.

Verse 2 of the passage quoted above, in the Revised Version is rendered thus: "For men shall be . . . lovers of money." Has there ever been a generation that has had so much money as this one? Homes are filled with electrical gadgets and mechanical marvels to take the effort out of labor. Savings and investments have reached record proportions in the majority of economies. Yet spending spirals upward, and big spenders are not the small wedge of wealthy people in the upper-

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income brackets but all the laborers and the office workers who have more money in their pockets in any given week than their parents saw in a month or their grandparents handled in three months. Yet the more money that clinks into their coffers the more they want. There is no record of any people anywhere saying, "We have enough. We want no more money." On the contrary, the more they get, the more avidly they are looking for more.

Money has become a god, not for the privileged few but for whole nations. The common people today are courted by big business because they have money to spend. Few homes lack their cars, their plush amenities, their television sets, and their hi-fi sets. Nor has saturation point been reached. The rush to acquire more and more of what money can buy increases in tempo every year.

Money is the royal road to happiness, the masses believe. Therefore, with all your getting, get money, for money buys the golden gadgetry that spells happiness, and without money and lots of it you have no hope of keeping up with those Joneses.

Perhaps the most alarming verse in the passage is the one that speaks of "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." Only those deliberately blind to the obvious will not admit the thought here. When in times past there have been godless elements in the community, the church has been the bastion of the faith; its ministers have upheld the standards of the faith, and the devout have quietly lived by that faith.

The picture today is horrifying to anyone to whom conservative Christianity means anything. Today—and who doesn't know it?—vociferous members of the clergy cast public aspersion on the Word of God, and learned leaders of Christendom write one earnest treatise after another in which they parade their dogmas of doubt. Has it ever been that pastors have so flagrantly turned

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their backs on God and His Word as to sneer at the contents of the Book as a collection of old-fashioned myths and its Author as merely a state of mind of the pious, a mere thought, an expression of the ultimate goodness. Today in the minds of some leading ecclesiastics, the very existence and being of the Creator of the universe are seriously questioned.

Try to find a religious leader who will lay his hand on God's inspired Word—the Book in which Paul believed absolutely—and who will say, "I believe every word that is written in this Book. I believe that this is the Word of God, written by holy men of God who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." I tell you that you will search denomination after denomination and find none. And those you may stumble upon are the exceptions, the theological outcasts, the "old-fashioned" ones.

The unhappy situation in which we find ourselves is that mankind looking for light and truth is led by blind leaders of the blind, who find no light shining on their own pathway from God's Word.

Those who have this outlook are those of whom Paul spoke when he said that they had "a form of godliness," but denied "the power thereof." Notice that he urges the people to turn away from them—not even casually associate with such.

Is not this very situation a significant sign of our times—that the shepherds of the flock are often so remote that their people have only a form of godliness? In what other age have we seen the clergy engaged in wordy considerations on the existence of God? In what past age—however dark—has there been such a turning from the Word of God by those who have set themselves to be the ministers of His Word?

This apostasy is, in itself, perhaps the greatest sign of all, but this age of ours is to be the last in the history of nations. And the "last days" climax in the

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glorious appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Only if we forget this, and only if we do not read what these signs fast fulfilling about us are trying to tell us will we be in grave danger.

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# **What Paul Believed About CHRIST'S SECOND COMING**

## **What would the doctrine**

of Christ's second coming be without Paul? True, it would still be there, laid down explicitly by Christ Himself; but Paul spells it out so plainly that only the deliberately blind can fail to see the great doctrine that Paul calls the "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13). And what a wonderful hope it is! What miseries would be eternally perpetuated if Christ were not to come! What horrors and troubles would proliferate if Christ were to remain away!

Paul looked for "that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." His whole outlook was colored by the bright expectation of that most glorious sunrise the world will ever see, the thrilling climax of history, the most dramatic and astounding event in the calendar of this world.

The great apostle to the Gentiles made no secret of

the fact that he looked forward to the literal, visible, and actual return of his Master. This is so plainly set down that many commentators and expositors look for difficulties that are not there. Let us examine two texts that sum up all Paul said and believed on Christ's second coming. The first is in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. It says: "*For the Lord himself—His coming is personal.*

*Shall descend from heaven—it is spectacular.*

*With a shout—it is audible.*

*With the voice of the archangel—He is accompanied.*

*And with the trump of God—He has the Father's seal of approval.*

*And the dead in Christ shall rise first—He comes to resurrect the sleeping saints.*

*Then we which are alive and remain—after the resurrection the living righteous are not excluded.*

*Shall be caught up together with them in the clouds—the righteous of all ages are to be united.*

*To meet the Lord in the air—Christ and the redeemed are together.*

*And so shall we ever be with the Lord"—never to part again.*

Now observe Paul's word to the Corinthian Christians wherein he elaborates a little. This is 1 Corinthians 15:51-54.

*"Behold, I shew you a mystery—the resurrection is a mystery.*

*We shall not all sleep—some will be alive when Christ comes.*

*But we shall all be changed—Christ's coming is accompanied by dynamic changes.*

*In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye—the change is instantaneous.*

*At the last trump—it is the final act.*

*For the trumpet shall sound—when God's trumpet sounds great things happen.*

*And the dead shall be raised incorruptible—at the resurrection (and not before) there is a change in the bodily*

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nature of the redeemed who have been raised.  
*And we shall be changed*—the living also will know such a change in their natures.  
*For this corruptible must put on incorruption*—the new body is not subject to decay.  
*And this mortal must put on immortality*—death has lost its dominion over man.  
*So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory*—the end of man's worst enemy, death, is promised; the mystery is over.

And when shall these things be? This is a question that everyone wants to have answered. Jesus said, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Matt. 24:36).

Paul did not know the time of his Lord's coming, either, but he gives some valuable advice. He writes, "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety: then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thess. 5:2, 3).

When he said that the day of the Lord would come as a thief in the night he did not mean that one day out of a clear sky the Lord would return. He did not mean that the Second Advent would be accomplished, leaving those who waited completely in the dark. Rather, he was saying that it would catch many—those too ignorant or indolent to study—unawares. In the passage just quoted he goes on to say, "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (verses 4, 5).

This verse proves that those who are alert will surely

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know the events that are to take place and that they herald the near approach of our Lord's return. It does not mean that we can pinpoint the time. It does not mean that we can set a date for our Lord's return. But it does mean that we can interpret those things that are going on about us until we can be sure that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.

The sign to await with particular attention, Paul said, was the announcement that mankind had at last achieved ultimate peace. "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them" (verse 3). This is the hour of which we must beware. When men are congratulating themselves on having at last found the formula to a tranquil existence and an assured future, that is the time to take great heed of the events around us. This will herald the imminent coming of Christ. But we must not ignore the signs already multiplying about us, which we have discussed previously. We must be prepared for the coming of the Lord, for indeed we know not the hour when the Master shall return.

Jesus had doubtless given Paul the basic thought on which to build when He said, "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:44). But only the unwary and indifferent will be caught unprepared by the suddenness of Christ's appearing. In which group—prepared or unprepared—will you be?

**Two standing columns  
of the Temple of Saturn  
in the Roman Forum, near  
which Paul was imprisoned.**

## **CHRIST'S SECOND COMING**





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## EPILOGUE

In the foregoing pages the great doctrines of Scripture have been examined from the viewpoint of the apostle Paul. Tradition has not entered the compass of our thinking. "The Bible and the Bible Only" is a slogan by which the true student and the honest seeker for light must live.

Some may think that there have been certain doctrines introduced into these pages that are not usually connected with Paul's teaching. I refer to such things as What Paul Believed About Prayer, Baptism, and the Sabbath. But it is important to know of Paul's teaching in these things just as much as it is important to know what he believed about Jesus Christ and the law of God.

These pages have not pretended to launch out into the deeps of doctrinal teaching. It has not been the purpose of this book to examine the fine shades of meaning that linguistic study could bring to light. Rather, this is a book dealing with the broad bases of belief as held by the apostle who regarded himself as equal to any other teacher of doctrine.



In these days when, to use the words of Jesus Himself, “men’s hearts [are] failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth” (Luke 21:26), we should also be mindful of the warning that Paul gives in his Epistle to Timothy: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim. 4:3, 4).

With the prophet’s eye Paul saw that the time would come when sound doctrine would be in the discard, and that truth would be unpopular. Today there is a tendency for men to overlook the important word of Jesus as recorded in John 7:17, “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.” The necessity for Bible-based doctrine is still very much an issue in the Christian’s intelligent thinking.

Sound doctrine, we believe, is still a necessary item in the Christian’s armor, along with grace, truth, and faith. Sound doctrine is essential to any Christian if he is to be effective for the Lord. Only as a man rids himself of the false and spurious and embraces what is right and true will he be able to answer temptation and error with a plain “Thus saith the Lord.”

## **EPILOGUE**

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## **READING LIST**